

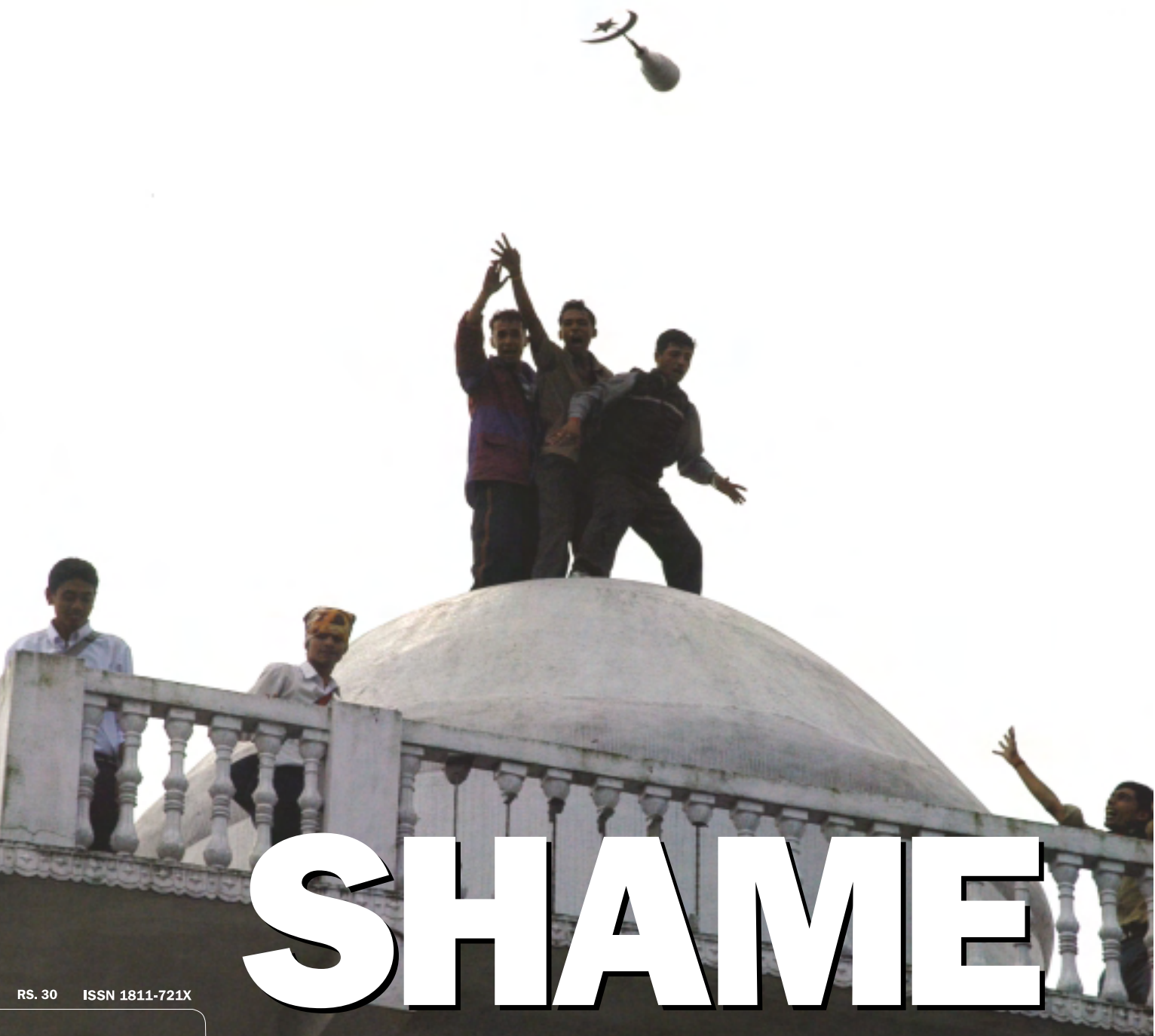
PEACE PROCESS | GAY JATRA | DIGITAL FUTURE | DE-EXOTICIZING NEPAL

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WEEKLY



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# Letters



## “History has shown again and again rebellions thrive on suppression”

MANJIL PATHAK

### Invite United Nations

U.N. RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE Matthew Kahane makes a sound case for why the United Nations should get involved in Nepal before it's too late (“No Military Solution to the Conflict,” Cover Story, September 5). This should be a particular reminder to people like Ram Sharan Mahat, Bhekh Bahadur Thapa and Nepal's military establishment at large. They have not only consistently opposed plans for U.N. participation in resolving Nepal's conflict but have shamelessly defended the successive governments'



poor human rights record. To those who think firepower can resolve conflicts, the recent hostage crisis in Russia is should be another wake-up call. Even after the collapse of the Soviet colossus, Kremlin commands one of world's most powerful militaries. Anxious to improve on his track record in handling hostage crises, President Putin failed miserably one

more time. History has shown again and again rebellions thrive on suppression.

MANJIL PATHAK  
GYANESHWORE

### Negative remarks

THE OPINIONS EXPRESSED BY Prof. Udayaraj Khanal in the interview show that he is either ignorant or deliberately trying to mislead the readers about many issues of science and technology in Nepal (“Law of Inertia,” Khula Manch, August 22).

Prof. Khanal was introduced as “an active researcher” with a reputation of even questioning Einstein's Theory of Relativity. Is Prof. Khanal really such a great genius? Being a low level employee in a patent office did not prevent Einstein from making some of the greatest scientific discoveries in physics. What has prevented Prof. Khanal, “an active researcher,” who even questioned the discoveries of Einstein, from making any research publication in last several years?

In response to a question if there are any scientists in Nepal, Prof. Khanal's answer was a flat “no.” This is an arrogant remark and an insult to all Nepali scientists engaged in research. He wants the readers to believe that the state of science in Nepal is really hopeless. In fact, there have been some remarkable developments in the field over last few years. In the last decade, there has been nearly 300 percent increase in science and technology human resources. Many new areas of sciences are being introduced in our universities. Nepali students are excelling in many prestigious research institutes around the world.

Only recently, 20 Nepali physics students were awarded scholarships to pursue doctoral program in American universities. Some of our technical institutes are at par or even better than many in the region. Many students from SAARC countries come to Nepal for higher studies.

In an answer to a question about Royal Nepal Academy of Science and Technology, RONAST, Prof. Khanal said that he was "not aware of a single outstanding contribution by RONAST to the advancement of science in Nepal." This again reflects Prof. Khanal's prejudice. What is an outstanding contribution by Prof. Khanal's definition? Is it to produce a Nobel Laureate or send a man to the space? Yes, by this definition RONAST may have been unable to make an outstanding contribution. But it has made a number of contributions.

For example, it has been helping the government in formulating national policy on science and technology. The academy offers support to Nepali scientists, including Ph.D. fellowships and research grants. It avails its research facilities to university students to carry out their research work and opportunities to Nepali scientists to work in foreign laboratories. It carries out collaborative research with many foreign research organizations. Several joint research papers with foreign scientists have resulted from such collaborations. Since 1999, the academy has been publishing a national science journal. RONAST is the only national institution in the country that confers awards to scientists in recognition of their contribution. Prof. Khanal himself was one of the awardees. Very soon a Science Learning Center is going to be established by RONAST to promote the public understanding of science and technology in the country.

It is difficult to believe that Prof. Khanal, who is so much concerned about the state of science in Nepal, could be unaware of all these activities. Not just RONAST, but also the Tribhuvan University, in Prof. Khanal's opinion, has not lived up to his expectations. So far, TU produces nearly 97 percent of total scientific human resources the country produces every year.

It was very surprising to know that Prof. Khanal considered Chandra

Shumser's rule as the "golden era for science in Nepal." Does any serious person genuinely believe that the Rana regime was the golden era for science in Nepal?

There is no doubt that a lot more has still to be done to improve the state of science in Nepal, particularly in the field of research. But such negative remarks like that of Prof. Khanal will certainly not help.

DR. DINESH BHUJU  
RONAST, KHUMALTAR

## Traffic mess

THANK YOU FOR "BUMPY RIDES" (Cover Story, by Satish Jung Shahi, August 22). The article brings to light a number of issues related to Kathmandu Valley's traffic (mis)management. Traffic is affected by conditions of roads, their width, the kinds of vehicles, operators themselves and the traffic rules. All these factors have contributed significantly to the Valley's traffic mess.

There are different kinds of vehicles on the road—cars, buses for schools and public transport, trucks of different sizes, taxis, tempos, motorcycles, rickshaws, cycles, and push carts. All have one thing in common: They move without any restrictions and respect for each other's space. Stray cattle add to the problems. Then the roadside parking, especially the taxis and pushcarts, eat up the limited space. As for the pavements, they are occupied by the hawkers; and pedestrians walk on the road.

The Traffic Week is organized every year; this time round the slogan was "Raise Public Awareness." A good message, but did it get across to the people? And even more importantly, did it make any difference? Hardly. A lot more needs to be done to improve the Valley's traffic management. Here's a long list. Setting up a separate lane for cyclists, towing away vehicles parked in wrong places; setting up taxi stands; regulating one-way traffic; striking a fine balance between the traffic load and the road's carrying capacity; and most of all, filling up the pot-holes.

SHIVA B. NEPALI PRADHAN  
PATAN

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## C O N T A C T

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THE NOTION  
OF NATIONHOOD

# Picture of the Week



**A TIME TO CELEBRATE:** A priest at Pashupatinath collects *dakshina* during Janai Purnima

nation weekly/Sagar Shrestha

# Helpless

The Iraqi militants were able to send a powerful message without having to fear any kind of reprisals. Worse, many of us went on a rampage to punish innocent Muslims.

BY ANIL J. SHAHI

**W**hen a friend expressed grief over the news of 12 Nepalis captured and held hostage by the Islamic militants in Iraq a couple of weeks ago, I assured him that he need not worry. At the time, I believed that the Islamic militants had nothing to gain from killing innocent citizens of an insignificant country, and that sooner or later they would set the hostages free. I was obviously wrong.

As a matter of fact, looking at it in hindsight, I realize now that the militants had everything to gain and nothing to lose from killing the helpless citizens of a helpless country: They were not only able to send a powerful message to the world that anyone hoping to work in Iraq faced possible lethal consequences, but they were also able to do so without having to fear any kind of reprisals whatsoever from a politically, economically and militarily weightless country. They also, perhaps accurately, assumed that even the international community would not be unduly worried about the suffering of such a hopelessly unimportant country.

What is more saddening, however, is the fact that in the name of revenge, many of us Nepalis ourselves went on a rampage to punish innocent Muslims who had absolutely nothing to do with the killings of the 12 Nepalis in Iraq. By burning Muslim establishments—houses of worship and businesses alike—and physically attacking innocent Muslim individuals, irrational youths with perverse intentions proved themselves to be no less evil than the militant monsters who committed the very heinous crime that those youths were supposed to be protesting against.

I have said it many times to everyone I have talked to about the horrific news, and I believe it is worth repeating: It is very easy, and perhaps even natural, to be swayed by negative emotions in times like these. However, as good and civil people, we must rise above the emotions and see the men who killed 12 of our brothers as individual monstrous criminals. They are far from being true Muslims; neither do they represent Arab society at large. We have every right to hold strong but peaceful protests against our own government, which has failed us time and again, and urge it to call upon the international community to find and punish the culprits. But for the sake of preserving the little sanity and peace that we have at the moment, please leave the innocent Muslims alone!

Indeed, it is frustrating to once again face the bitter incompetence of our own government. Not only did it miserably fail to do what was necessary to secure the release of the hostages. In the aftermath of the tragic end to the crisis, it failed again to anticipate the possible riots and take preemptive measures. Especially after having been through the Hritik Roshan *kanda* (incident) as recently as 2000, one would have imagined that the government had learned their lesson and prepared itself for another riot. But on that Wednesday morning policing was conspicuously absent. When can we begin to expect responsible,

visionary, alert and strong leaders in the government? Is Nepal a failed state already? I sadly wonder.

It's time our leaders realized that for the sake of preserving and upholding the proud Nepali nationality, they must stop political bickering, get a firm grip on corruption and, for once, start to think about the people they are supposed to be serving. Alleviating poverty should be their prime objective. After all, it is because we are poor that millions of us go abroad seeking employment, even to highly dangerous areas. It is because we are poor that millions more young Nepali girls are being sold in brothels in India. It is because we are poor, frustrated and see no hope that the Maoists have been able to garner whatever support they have. And it is because we are poor and helpless that even the barbaric terrorists believe they can murder us in cold blood with impunity.

No doubt, the task of bringing prosperity to one of the poorest countries in the world is daunting and that Nepal cannot be turned into a paradise overnight. But please at least give us the hope, the real hope, that our lives will be better in the future. The government can do so by beginning to act responsibly and trying to do one thing right at a time. For now, help heal the wound of an aggrieved people. That will be a good start. **N**



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**MA-HA JATRA:** The Ma-ha duo, Madan Krishna Shrestha and Haribansha Acharya, in a performance at BICC marking their 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary together

**Labor directive**

The government has directed manpower agencies to report the status of workers they have sent to Gulf countries. The directive was issued to locate and count Nepalis working in Gulf countries. Following a day of rioting that clean swept almost all the offices of the manpower agencies in the capital, the government's directive may be ineffective to trace Nepalis abroad. The directive was issued following reports that most overseas jobseekers leaving for Gulf countries were illegally sent to Iraq and promised highly paid jobs. The government has also directed the agencies to make necessary arrangements to bring the workers home from war-ravaged Iraq.

**Afghan deaths**

Three Nepali nationals were killed in a powerful bomb explosion in Kabul. The explosion tore through the office of an American defense contractor in the heart of the Afghan capital. Seven people including the three Nepalis were killed in the explosion. Rebels supporting the former Taliban regime reportedly carried out the explosions. Two Americans were also killed in the incident. American and international companies in Kabul employ a number of Nepalis. This is the first reported incident of any Nepali killed in Afghanistan. More than 300 Nepalis are working with the International

Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Kabul.

**Parties' protest**

The four political parties spearheading an "anti-regression" movement held demonstrations in the capital to protest the so-called mistreatment meted out to Nepali Congress President Girija Prasad Koirala by security staff of the domestic terminal of Tribhuvan International Airport. Koirala was reportedly denied access to the terminal's apron area. Hundreds of activists of the four-party alliance that comprises the Nepali Congress, People's Front Nepal, Nepal Workers and Peasants Party and Nepal Sadbhavana Party-Anandi Devi carried out a rally from Ratna Park which marched past Putalisadak, Shahid Gate,

Bhotahiti and concluded at Ratna Park. Chanting angry slogans against the Royal Nepal Army and the Deuba government, the protestors blocked traffic for an hour at Ratna Park area during the protest.

**Bus mishap**

Four people were killed and 10 injured when a passenger bus met with an accident at Jhamke in Pawanagar VDC in Dang district. The passenger bus traveling to Bagmare from Tulshipur went off the road at Jhamke. The bus skidded backward on a steep road and crashed, reports said. All four killed were from Dang. Two out of the four died while undergoing treatment at the Mahendra hospital in Ghorahi. Six of those injured were said to be in critical condition.

**Arrests in India**

The Indian police at Mirik in Darjeeling arrested four suspected Maoists. The Indian police identified those arrested as Yam Bahadur Mukhiya, Tara Pradhan, Bhim Raj Limbu and Bal Kumar Gole. Mukhiya, who is believed to be a high-ranking leader of the Maoists, was arrested while being rushed to Darjeeling hospital to undergo treatment. He had hurt his eyes while making ex-

plosives at a Maoist base camp in Ilam. A Sub-Divisional Magistrate court in Darjeeling remanded three of the four Nepalis to judicial custody and one to the police custody for ten days. A team from Nepal has left for India to investigate.

**More disappearances**

Amnesty International says that cases of "disappearances," the organization's term for cases where people are abducted by the state, in Nepal have increased in last year. There were 378 cases of such disappearances last year, higher than the number of cases in the previous five years together. In its report, "Nepal: Escalating Disappearances Amid a Culture of Impunity," the London-based human rights watchdog expressed concern about growing culture of impunity in Nepal. The dramatic escalation in disappearances is not only causing massive suffering to the victims and their families but is also undermining the rule of law, Amnesty said. Since 1998, Amnesty International has received reports of 622 cases of disappearances and excesses. The organization has also received numerous reports of abductions, torture and killings by the Maoists.

**A nation in shock**

King Gyanendra expressed deep condolences to the family and relatives of the people killed by Iraqi militants. The palace secretariat said that the King and Queen were shocked and grieved by the cruel and barbaric murders of the Nepali hostages.

Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba called for restraint in an address to the nation on Wednesday, September 1. He announced compensation of Rs. 1 million to each of the families of the victims. The government also declared Thursday, September 2, a national day of mourning for the 12 Nepalis killed in Iraq. The Home Ministry said at least two people died on Wednesday during the violence, one at

Ratnapark when security forces fired on a mob that tried to attack the police and the other in front of the Egyptian Embassy in Pulchowk when guards opened fire on a crowd. Curfew was imposed inside the Ring Road and for 200 meters outside it starting Wednesday afternoon. The local administration also imposed a curfew in Birtamod.

Prime Minister of India Manmohan Singh and U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell called Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and expressed sorrow over the killing of 12 Nepalis in Iraq. Indian Foreign Minister K. Natwar Singh, British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw, Pope John Paul II and the governments of Bangladesh and Japan also condemned the killings and expressed sympathy to the government and people of Nepal.

## 'Step down'

The Nepal Foreign Employment Agencies Association asked Minister for Home Purna Bahadur Khadka, Minister for Labor Raghuj Pant and Minis-



ter of State for Foreign Affairs Prakash Sharan Mahat to step down, blaming them for failing to protect hundreds of manpower agencies during the rampage on Wednesday, September 1. Hundreds of demonstrators protesting the killing of 12 Nepalis vandalized manpower offices. Association Chairman Nirmal Gurung said the government had been a "silent spectator." The association has also asked its members not to send people abroad for work unless the government guarantees security of its members and provides compensation to all the companies that were vandalized. The association said that attacks on 325 manpower agencies on Wednesday caused the loss of billions of rupees. The rioters are said to have destroyed more than 300,000 passports deposited with manpower agencies in a "sponsored way," the association said.

## More deaths

A gang of unidentified people in Lucknow murdered five Nepalis from one family, the Press Trust of India reported. The family hailed from Nayamill of Anandaban VDC in Rupandehi. According to the report, those killed were Durga Dutta Gyanwali, 45, his wife Harikala, 40, and their children

Raju, Bhuwan and Samjhana. The family had been living in Lucknow since 1982. Gyanwali was an employee at Route Permit Department at the Transport Office in Lucknow.

## International flights

Three international airlines operating flights to Nepal have suspended their services because of the violent protests in Kathmandu. Qatar Airways, Pakistan International Airlines and Air Sahara suspended their flights after mobs vandalized their offices in Kathmandu. Air Sahara was to start its regular service on the day of the riots on Wednesday, September 1.

## Bus accident

Four people died when a Himal Yatayat bus fell into the Trishuli River near Kurintar on the Prithvi Highway. Police said the bus was carrying 29 passengers. Twenty-one injured people were rescued. The bus was traveling from Kathmandu to Dharan. The police are investigating the cause of the accident.

## Gurkha protest

A group of 400 retired Gurkhas who had served in the regiment for 15-30 years have demanded British citizenship. "The meet-

ing of immigration officials in Liverpool failed to satisfy us," said Tikendradal Dewan, the chairman of the Brigade of Gurkhas Welfare Society, who served the British Army for 31 years, the news portal news.scotsman.com reported. The society says it is fighting for rights equal to that of Commonwealth citizens, who are granted British citizenship for just four years of service in the British Army. Dozens of Liverpool residents including Corporal Jack Moorhouse, a former Lancashire Fusilier who served alongside Gurkhas in Burma in the Second World War joined the protest.

## More airlines

Within the next two months private airlines from Thailand and Bangladesh will start their services in Nepal. With Fuket Air of Thailand and GMG Air of Bangladesh, the number foreign airlines operating in Kathmandu will reach 15. GMG will have daily Dhaka-Kathmandu-Dhaka flights, and Fuket Air will have 11 flights every week from Bangkok.

## CPIJ concern

The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists con-

demned the attack on the press in Nepal. In separate incidents, protestors in Kathmandu damaged the premises of Kantipur and Spacetime Network on Wednesday, September 1. Crowds set fire to vans and motorcycles and wrecked equipment at Kantipur Publications and Kantipur Television and destroyed vehicles, cameras and computers at Channel Nepal, an affiliate of Spacetime Network. Kantipur said police ignored repeated calls for assistance. The committee suggested that the attack was because the head of Spacetime Network, Jamim Shah, is Muslim and because they broadcast reports defending the Nepali Muslim minority.

## Water sharing

The government has written to the Indian embassy to call the meeting of the Nepal-India Joint Committee on Water Resources. The Indo-Nepal treaty on water resources stipulates that the joint committee must hold a regular meeting every six months. According to Kantipur, the meeting will be held within this October in New Delhi. The committee was formed in 2000 during the visit of the then Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala to finalize water related issues.





**IN-FLIGHT ENTERTAINMENT**

Independent aviation quality monitor Skytrax has rated Qatar Airways in-flight entertainment as the eighth best in the world. Qatar Airways now joins a distinguished group of airlines—including Virgin Atlantic, Cathay Pacific and British Airways—that carry the title “Best In-flight Entertainment.”

**BOTTLERS NEPAL CELEBRATES SILVER JUBILEE**

Bottlers Nepal has completed 25 years of operation in Nepal. The company produces and markets Coca Cola, one of the best-known soft drinks in the world. Bottlers Nepal recently sold 98 percent of its shares to the South African Bottling Company. A group of Nepali shareholders own the remaining 2 percent and also control 92 percent of the company’s subsidiary in Bharatpur. The Nepali public owns the remaining shares.

**OASIS UNVEILED**

Shree Distillery recently launched Oasis, a new brand of gin. The product, according to the company, is brewed with juniper berries and produced under the guidelines of international liquor making procedures. Shree Distillery expects that Oasis will do well in the market.

**WHO RECOGNIZES NEPALI PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANIES**

The World Health Organization has recognized five Nepali pharmaceutical firms with good manufacturing practices award. The Department of Drugs Administration had recommended them to the WHO. The industries receiving WHO recognition are Deurali Janata Pharmaceuticals, Omnica Pharmaceuticals, National Health Care, NPL and Quest Pharmaceuticals.

The WHO Good Marketing Practices Certificate is awarded for meeting norms prescribed by the organization. Manufacturing practice, technology and management of pharmaceuticals are considered before awarding the certificate. The WHO has set a requirement for all

pharmaceutical companies in Nepal to meet the WHO GMP standard by the year 2063 B.S. Nepal has 38 pharmaceutical industries including 10 local industries. According to the Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Industries Association, the market in Nepal is about Rs. 6 billion a year. National industries produce enough to fill about 29 percent of the demand; most of the rest is imported from India.

**BFL OPENS NEW BRANCH**

Butwal Finance Limited opened its branch in Kathmandu. BFL has been providing loans for trade, industry, agriculture, services and other requirements. It has also been providing schemes for hire purchase and home loans. It also aims to open a money-exchange counter and leasing finance and merchant finance services in the future.

**ATGC PRESENTS REPORT**

Brij Gopal Innani, chairman of the Asian Textiles and Garment Council, presented the report on “The Solution of the Impact on Garments and Textiles Industries After WTO” to Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba. The report highlights the problems Nepal could face on entering the global market and also suggests likely solutions for the problems. The report suggests that the government form a textile board, make programs for cotton farming and provide subsidies to farmers. The report also underlines the need to provide duty free export of garments and textiles to the U.S. for three years in order to make the industry competitive in the global market. The report also claims that the textile industry holds potential to generate two million jobs and can support 10 million people if an autonomous textile board is formed.

**DIRECTORY PUBLISHED**

Connection Nepal has published Connection Nepal Overseas Employment Directory-2004-05. According to a press release, the directory

contains telephone numbers of foreign employment agencies, airlines, money transfer agencies and training centers.

**MNC STOPS OPERATIONS**

Yet another Indian multinational company has temporarily suspended operations at its Nepal subsidiary. Colgate Palmolive (Nepal), a wholly owned subsidiary of Colgate India, has announced that it is suspending operations for a week due to scarcity of raw materials. The report could not be independently confirmed, and telephone calls to the company office were not answered. Colgate Palmolive (Nepal) was set up in 1997, and a state-of-the-art manufacturing facility was commissioned in July 1998. Though the company announced a profit of Rs. 4.7 million in its first year of operation, it subsequently ran into trouble with the Maoists, who have been extorting money from business houses and intimidating them. Several factories have been bombed.



In October last year the company was forced to close its factory for a week due to the deteriorating security situation. The factory is located in Hetauda in Makwanpur district in central Nepal, where the Maoists have become very active recently. Another big Indian company, Asian Paints, also has its factory in Hetauda. Colgate is a subsidiary of Colgate Palmolive USA, a global leader in oral care with operations in 194 countries.

**AIR SAHARA POSTPONES INAUGURAL FLIGHT**

Air Sahara postponed its first flight to Kathmandu and delayed all operations indefinitely. Air Sahara’s service was to have commenced from Thursday, September 2. Zenith Travels, the GSA of the airline, had said that Air Sahara’s 737 aircraft would be arriving that afternoon, but the deteriorating law and order situation in the Valley and the curfew led to the postponement of the flight. A new date has not been announced.

Air Sahara is the second private Indian airline to fly to Kathmandu after Jet Airways. Air Sahara also flies to Colombo, Sri Lanka and many destinations in India.





Proposed Revised Flight Schedule  
(Covering remote sectors)  
Effective from 25 JUN-15 SEP'04

From	To	Flight No.	Days of Operation	Dep. Time	Arr. Time	Rupee Tariff One way	Dollar Tariff One way	Remarks
Kathmandu	Lukla	YA 111	Daily	0630	0705	1665	91	DHC-6/300
	Lukla	YA 101	Daily	0635	0710	1665	91	DHC-6/300
	Lukla	YA107	Daily	0810	0845	1665	91	DHC-6/300
	Lukla	YA113	1,2,3,4,5,7	0815	0850	1665	91	DHC-6/300
	Rumjatar	YA 221	2,4,7	0950	1025	1245	61	DHC-6/300
	Phaplu	YA 181	1,3,5	0955	1030	1480	85	DHC-6/300
	Manang	YA 601	6	0815	0915	2995	122	DHC-6/300
	Simara	YA 147	Daily	1135	1200	970	55	DHC-6/300
	Simara	YA 141	Daily	1300	1325	970	55	DHC-6/300
	Simara	YA 143	Daily	1430	1455	970	55	DHC-6/300
	Bharatpur	YA 173	Daily	1115	1140	1160	61	DHC-6/300
	Bharatpur	YA 175	Daily	1400	1425	1160	61	DHC-6/300
	Biratnagar	YA 151	Daily	0700	0740	2585	85	SAAB 340B
	Biratnagar	YA 153	Daily	1040	1120	2585	85	SAAB 340B
	Biratnagar	YA 155	Daily	1620	1700	2585	85	SAAB 340B
	Pokhara	YA 131	Daily	0905	0930	1710	67	SAAB 340B
	Pokhara	YA 135	Daily	1530	1555	1710	67	SAAB 340B
	Bhadrapur	YA 121	Daily	1200	1250	2950	109	SAAB 340B
	Nepalgunj	YA 177	Daily	1245	1345	3500	109	SAAB 340B
	Bhairahawa	YA 163	Daily	1425	1500	2220	79	SAAB 340B
Biratnagar	Kathmandu	YA 152	Daily	0800	0840	2585	85	SAAB 340B
Biratnagar	Kathmandu	YA 154	Daily	1140	1220	2585	85	SAAB 340B
Biratnagar	Kathmandu	YA 156	Daily	1720	1800	2585	85	SAAB 340B
Pokhara	Kathmandu	YA 132	Daily	0950	1015	1710	67	SAAB 340B
Pokhara	Kathmandu	YA 136	Daily	1615	1640	1710	67	SAAB 340B
Bhadrapur	Kathmandu	YA 122	Daily	1310	1400	2950	109	SAAB 340B
Nepalgunj	Kathmandu	YA 178	Daily	1405	1505	3500	109	SAAB 340B
Bhairahawa	Kathmandu	YA 164	Daily	1520	1555	2220	79	SAAB 340B
Lukla	Kathmandu	YA 112	Daily	0720	0755	1665	91	DHC-6/300
	Kathmandu	YA 102	Daily	0725	0800	1665	91	DHC-6/300
	Kathmandu	YA 108	Daily	0900	0935	1665	91	DHC-6/300
	Kathmandu	YA 114	1,2,3,4,5,7	0905	0940	1665	91	DHC-6/300
Rumjatar	Kathmandu	YA 222	2,4,7	1040	1115	1245	79	DHC-6/300
Phaplu	Kathmandu	YA 182	1,3,5	1045	1120	1480	85	DHC-6/300
Manang	Kathmandu	YA 602	6	0930	1030	2995	122	DHC-6/300
Simara	Kathmandu	YA 148	Daily	1215	1240	970	55	DHC-6/300
Simara	Kathmandu	YA142	Daily	1340	1405	970	55	DHC-6/300
Simara	Kathmandu	YA144	Daily	1510	1535	970	55	DHC-6/300
Bharatpur	Kathmandu	YA 174	Daily	1155	1220	1160	61	DHC-6/300
Bharatpur	Kathmandu	YA 176	Daily	1440	1505	1160	61	DHC-6/300
Nepalgunj	Dolpa	YA 717	1	0630	0715	1315	85	DHC-6/300
	Simikot	YA 711	4	0630	0730	1800	96	DHC-6/300
Dolpa	Nepalgunj	YA 718	1	0730	0815	1315	85	DHC-6/300
Simikot	Nepalgunj	YA 712	4	0745	0845	1800	96	DHC-6/300
Surkhet	Jumla	YA 713	2	0705	0740	970	63	DHC-6/300
	Rara	YA 715	3	0705	0745	1800	96	DHC-6/300
Jumla	Surkhet	YA 714	2	0755	0830	970	63	DHC-6/300
Rara	Surkhet	YA 716	3	0800	0845	1800	96	DHC-6/300

Monday 1, Tuesday 2, Wednesday 3, Thursday 4, Friday 5, Saturday 6, Sunday 7

■ Subject to change without prior notice.

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# SEEKING A SOLUTION

Deuba has his task cut out: Get New Delhi's support to fight the insurgency without the big neighbor being seen as interventionist

BY SATISH JUNG SHAHI

**W**HEN HE WENT ON HIS FIRST official visit to India in 1996, Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba discussed everything with his hosts except the looming threat of Maoist insurgency. He didn't even know the rebels back then, having set aside their 40-point demand in order to make the trip to Delhi.

But on September 8, Deuba, in his third innings as prime minister, will be discussing little else but the insurgency when he arrives in New Delhi. Of course there will be regular matters—water sharing, trade and transit and the like—but the visit will be dominated by security concerns raised by the Maoist insurgency.

There is a growing realization in New Delhi that it ignores the insurgency at its own cost. In just over eight years, the small rag-tag band of dreamy guerrillas who emerged in the western hills have ballooned into a major force, threatening the existence of the state and embroiling the country in violence and mayhem. Deuba's job in Delhi will be to ensure India's unambiguous support, both military and diplomatic, in dealing with the Maoists. This will be crucial if the Maoists are to be forced on the back foot and told in no uncertain terms that their "people's war" can inflict a lot more damage to the Nepali state, all right, but they can never overpower the state. Closing off Indian territory to them will send the strongest signal yet that they should seek a peaceful resolution with the state.

Getting Indian support for this should not be too difficult, given the rising concern in India over the Maoist rebellion. But as always, when it comes to Nepal-India relations, perceptions at home are the major difficulty. Many opposition leaders and intellectuals in Nepal are already feeling itchy, fueled by Indian press reports that there is going to be some sort of a



nw/SS

MAN ON A MISSION: Deuba's focus will be on the Maoist issue

proposal from India to launch a “joint security operation” along the long Nepal-India border to contain the Maoists.

“We do not want a foreign army marching left and right inside our country,” says left-leaning rights activist and former politician Hiranya Lal Shrestha, who at one time was in the foreign affairs committee of the Parliament. “All we want India is to assure us that it is going to cut off the supply-line of arms to the Nepali Maoists from its territory. That we would happily welcome as a great assistance.”

Border security can be a touchy subject, given Nepal’s sensitivities and India’s own ignorance of the threats posed by the Maoists until recently. The rebels have repeatedly crossed the border to India, seeking shelter, weapons and training. There is a popular perception in Nepal that New Delhi ignored the Maoist threats until the rebels began linking up with their own outlawed groups such as the Peoples’ War Group and the Maoist Communist Centre, which operate in Bihar and Andhra Pradesh. This, however, didn’t stop other major powers—the United States, Britain and the E.U. countries—from closely following the Maoist insurgency, courtesy of the post-9/11 security environment.

The Indian officialdom is now deeply concerned, both about the possibility of Maoists forming a “red zone” from the Himalayas of Nepal to the beaches of Andhra Pradesh, and about outside powers playing a major role in an area it sees as vital for its security. This newfound realization is pushing Indian officials to take a more proactive role in dealing with the Maoists. High-profile arrests of Nepali Maoists in India over the past few months manifest that concern. Recently Indian security forces raided a Maoist training center in Nainital, across the districts of Kanchanpur and Kailali in the Farwest.

While this can be a positive turn of events for Nepal, the challenge is to ensure that India’s actions don’t worsen the problem. This is where many analysts think Deuba has to be careful. Any Indian military role in Nepali territory, no matter how benign, could be counter-productive.

Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Prakash Sharan Mahat flatly denies anything of that sort has either been dis-



DEUBA'S COUNTERPART: Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh

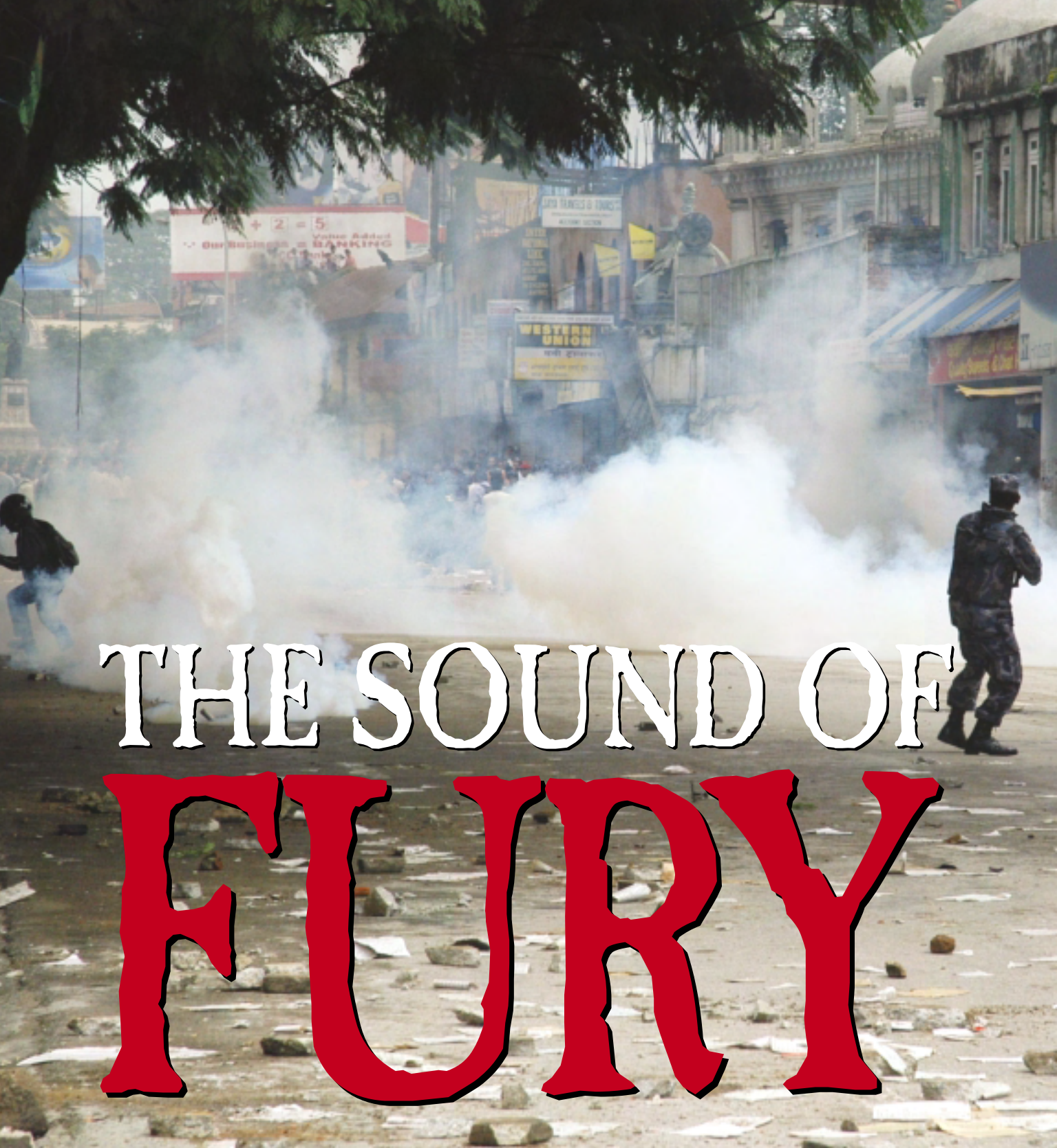
cussed, or that such suggestions have been made by New Delhi at all. But Indian press reports say the joint security operations have already begun along Nepal’s border with the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. There are also reports that India is planning to curb activities along the open border by making it mandatory to carry official identity cards.

“The focus of Prime Minister Deuba’s visit will be the Maoist issue,” says Yadab Kant Silwal, former secretary general of SAARC. But to make the visit productive, the government, already hounded by legitimacy issues raised by the opposition, has to show that it has the support of major forces in Nepal. “The government should sit down with all parties and approach every issue with

a clear agenda. Otherwise, I doubt even India would give much legitimacy to Prime Minister Deuba,” adds Silwal.

The opposition meanwhile have their own axe to grind. More than anything else, they want Deuba to push for Indian acceptance of U.N. facilitation to resolve the conflict. India, it is known, is extremely reluctant to bring any outside power as a peace broker for concern that, that might erode its own influence in Nepal’s peace process.

“We need India’s assistance to tackle the increasing network of the Maoists in the South Asian region,” says Nepali Congress spokesman Arjun Narsingh KC, “but it should also not very difficult to bring in the United Nations as facilitator for the peace talks.” ■



# THE SOUND OF FURY

The killing of innocent Nepalis in Iraq caused justifiable pain and anger, but that doesn't excuse the apparently uncontrolled expression of outrage

**BY JOHN NARAYAN PARAJULI**

**I**RAQ HAS NOW BECOME AN unforgettable wound on the Nepali psyche. For the rest of the world, 12 Nepalis are just statistical fallout from the war in Iraq; for Nepal, it's a horror and an outrage. Twelve Nepalis were killed by the Army of Ansar al-

Sunna, a terrorist outfit, after it held them hostage for 13 days. One hostage was brutally decapitated. The other 11 were shot in the head. The statement by the group was accompanied by disturbing images showing the decapitation and a hooded terrorist holding up the head as a trophy. The images, impossibly gruesome and painful for the families, were infuriating to most Nepalis.



nw/Sagar Shrestha

The country went into a state of despair and fury: Thousands poured spontaneously into the streets of Kathmandu on Wednesday morning, a day after the news broke. Driven by their grief and anger, they soon turned the nation upside down. Within hours, the capital had descended into a state of anarchy. Protesters vented their fury by setting ablaze the offices of manpower companies, air-



nw/SS

lines offices from the Gulf region and Pakistan, media outlets and businesses with Islamic names or perceived connections. As the madness grew, everything that came handy was tossed into the fire. It started in retribution, but the atmosphere of protest quickly turned into targeted vandalism.

The violence was inexcusable and shameful, and it could have lasting repercussions. "It could lead to further social unrest with more serious ramifications on the economy," says Kedar Bhakta Mathema, former Nepali Ambassador to Japan. The real cost of the riots may be far greater than the damage done on Wednesday. A number of Nepali organizations based in the Gulf have appealed for calm, and they fear a strong backlash. The communal disharmony that's resulted from the riots, if ignored, will leave a lasting scar in the community, making Muslims deeply suspicious of the majority Hindus and Buddhists. This could have ramifications beyond our borders.

The remittance-dependant economy could take a beating if the flow of workers to the Gulf dries up. The remittance these workers send home each year is at least Rs. 70 billion, equivalent to more than two-thirds of the annual budget or one-sixth of the nation's GDP. The actual amount could be much greater, as most of the money comes through informal channels. If the present social unrest continues or becomes fuelled by extremists and hardliners, it could shut off those remittances and put overseas employment in jeopardy.

As the news of the killing continues to fill the media here, questions are flying. Why were they killed? Who is guilty? How many Nepalis are left in Iraq? Did the government do enough or exercise the right sort of diplomacy for the release? The anger is fuelled by charges that the government was nonchalant about efforts to rescue the hostages.

It's hard to tell why the terrorists killed the innocent Nepalis. The Army of Ansar al-Sunna in its statement charged the Nepalis of being the "collaborators" of the American "infidels." "We have carried out the sentence of God against 12 Nepalese who came from their country to fight the Muslims and to serve the Jews and the Christians," says the statement accompanying the grisly footage of the killing. Independent observers say the primary objective of the terrorists operating in Iraq now is to scare off foreigners, whoever they might be. The Nepalis were made scapegoats to give that message to powerful countries.

Nepalis are manning United Nations, American and British buildings and facilities in Iraq. "The kidnapping could be a direct fallout of being seen as aligned to western forces," says Dan Bahadur Tamang, former president of Federation of Foreign Employment Agencies Association. British analyst Global Risk Strategies has hired 500 Nepalis who had served in the British Army's Gurkha regiments to guard coalition facilities. Nepalis are employed by a large number of private security firms including one of the subsidiaries of

# A Disguised Hurt

The recent eruption of violence was waiting to happen. To a people routinely lied to by the rulers, the shame struck deep.

BY VINCENT ANDROSIGLIO

**T**he recent outburst of violence after the execution of 12 Nepalis in Iraq can give us a peep into the Nepali psyche. It was something waiting to happen.

During this last year, I have often walked the streets of Nepal asking people what they dreamt the night before. I discovered two main dreams that hundreds are having. First, men, women and children, even soldiers, dream of getting caught and shot in the crossfire between the security forces and the Maoists. Second, thousands are having the same dream that expresses a severe state of helplessness.

Either way, there's no doubt that the Nepali psyche is depressed. It has a sense of emptiness and loss that nothing will work. The Nepali psyche is full of a volcanic rage—a rage that has been bottled up in a collective depression that is expressed in nightmares. And we know that nightmares signal emergency. The Nepali mind is drowning in fears of hopelessness and despair.

This hopeless and seemingly endless journey of torture and uncertainty has left the psyche in a state of collapse. After years of misrule—the trust of the Nepali people in the government and the monarchy is at an all-time low. You can see this expressed by some locals who don't care to read the news anymore: "Why bother," they say, "it's the same old nothing."

Yes, living with continuous disappointment: The government changes every six months; no progress in the state of affairs between the Maoists and security

forces; no jobs; tens of thousands leaving for work abroad and families breaking up. The Nepalis are convinced that the government will only serve its own interests. They feel abandoned. The people feel the Nepali government—the nation's parents—do nothing for them and hence a deepening feeling of rejection and "not being good enough."

This is the backdrop to the

tion set off this violence? After all, over the years, thousands of Nepalis have been tortured and killed by the security forces and the Maoists. Why did it take foreigners killing Nepalis to stir the violence?

Here are some ideas. First, the Nepalis were outraged to see their brothers publicly executed on film. That, I believe deepened their shame. They were humiliated in front of the whole world and no-



**RAGE: Fears of helplessness converted into violence**

execution of the Nepalis in Iraq. It is in this state of mind that the Nepali people received the terrifying news of the execution. I imagine this expanding rage and depression as a balloon that is getting bigger and bigger. And it was the execution that burst the balloon. All that pent up rage held down by fears of helplessness converted into violence against manpower agencies, the government and the Muslims. The Iraq experience allowed the people to express their deeper issues toward the Nepali state. Their unbearable depression gave them permission to be violent—for a short period, all right.

But why did the Iraq execu-

tion seemed to care—the ultimate rejection and abandonment. The Nepalis are a modest people: The shame struck deep.

It is reported that the ruthless, fanatic murderers said, "There was no response from the Nepal government." When your own country—your national soul—doesn't come to your support—it is emotionally devastating. Secondly, the international media, especially the U.S., hardly gave any attention to the Nepali executions. Talk about feeling like you are not good enough. That hurt. That really hurt.

Next, the Iraqi event created a unity amongst the Nepalis—a rarity these days. A common enemy pulled the nation together, much like during the Hritik Roshan epi-

sode some years ago, and gave them a sense of power. All these elements came together to transform depression into violence.

What does this kind of violence do for us? First, we temporarily feel released from the oppressive sense of helplessness. And those Nepalis who are not involved in the violence per se, but wish to do so, vicariously express their rage through the protesters. The few are acting out the violence for many.

Next, this violence serves as a ritual to relieve us of our pain: Instead of feeling the pain inside of us, we seek a solution by looking to blame others. Look at the attacks on manpower agencies. Although inexcusable, it is understandable. The manpower agencies, in conjunction with the government, symbolizes the state of corruption in Nepal. They sent the Nepalis to Iraq to make money. They sold out their brothers.

Feeling desperate that the government would do nothing as usual, this event gave Nepalis an opportunity to take things into their own hands—a self-affirmation—but tainted by the consequences of violence. It is a violence that manifests our revenge—blood for blood. It gave a sense of power that hoped to communicate to people like the manpower agencies—that they are wrong.

We must do something to deal with this chronic depression that haunts the Nepali soul. It won't be easy. It is exactly where you feel the most frightened and the most pain that your greatest opportunity lies for personal growth. We can do something small rather than drown in fears of despair. We can help someone, anyone—a neighbor, a friend. Volunteer your time for good; pray for your enemies. Do something to give expression to your courage—before the violence within gets you too. **N**

*(Androsiglio, a former professor of psychiatry at New York Medical College, New York, has been living in Nepal for the past one year.)*

Translation of Ansar al-Sunna's statement

Haliburton, the company formerly run by U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney. Companies like Custer Battles, Armor Group, Blackwater and DynCorp have many Nepali recruits, reports say. DynCorp employed the three Nepalis killed in Afghanistan late last month.

Back home, many who had a hand in sending the workers to Iraq knew the gravity of the danger there. "Prahlad Giri is the culprit, don't let him go," cried abducted Nepalis in one of their last messages, shown in the video footage released by the terrorists. But Giri, who is the operator of Moonlight Consultancy, is still free. "Even the court takes the word of a dying man as gospel truth," says Subodh Pyakurel, president of INSEC. The government still hasn't acted seriously on the pleas of 12 dying Nepalis to prosecute Giri for his complicity in sending them to Iraq. Although the government has cancelled the registration of Moonlight Consultancy, they have yet to arrest the principals of the company or file a criminal case against them.

"You can't just blame all the manpower agencies," says Tamang, former president of Federation of Foreign Employment Agencies Association. "The government lacks an oversight mechanism to monitor the business." Statistics reveal that the demand from countries like Kuwait and Jordan that border Iraq has dramatically increased in the last year. Over the last 10 years the total demand from Kuwait for Nepali laborers was 2,900. Last year 10,000 Nepalis went to Kuwait. "The government is not keeping a vigilant eye on manpower agencies," says Mohan Rimal, who runs an orientation center in Baneshwore for foreign jobseekers.

The failure here at home is just half the story; experts say the government failed abroad too. "It was a serious diplomatic failure," says a former ambassador to one of the Gulf countries, referring to the killings in Iraq. "The best approach would have been through Iraq itself rather than through Qatar or Pakistan." It is always difficult to resolve critical issues like a hostage crisis without being actually on the ground.

Other diplomats blame the lack of a proactive response from the Nepali bureaucracy for the killings. "When the Indian and Kenyan governments can se-

*continued on page 27*

Statement from Military Unit Concerning Allah's Judgment to the Nepalis who have come from their Country to Serve the Crusaders.

In the Name of Allah the Most Merciful and Magnificent! Praise to Allah the God of the Worlds, always there for the good Muslim people, who will make His people, the good Muslims victorious; prayers and greetings to the Prophet, to His family and friends.

Greetings to Our Islamic Nation from east to west. There is no doubt that the spite and malice towards the enemies of Allah is the language of Jihad that Allah has commanded on Muslims; so by Jihad, Allah manifests nations as he says, "O ye who believe! Give your response to God. And His Apostle, when He calleth you to that which will give you life..." (the 24th Aya of Al-Anfal), so there is no true life except by Jihad.

America today has used all it has and has gotten help from others in order to fight Islam and its people under the name of "the war against terror," and it is nothing but an

evil crusade against Muslims so that they won't go back to their religion and apply their God's Shari'a [the tenets of Islam], but far, very far is that. So here are the holy warriors everywhere and in every horizon and there are a lot of Muslims whom Allah has guided to righteousness and truth; and the war between us and those filthy people is seesawing and this is Allah's will for His people. And because of this, and for the malice to Allah's enemies, we have, thanks to God, conducted Allah's ruling to 12 Nepalis who came from their land seeking assistance from their God Buddha in order to fight Muslims in this land by serving Jews and Christians, grandchildren of monkeys and pigs. And in the end, we direct this call to Nepal's government and to similar governments and to those who are like that—the tails of Jews and the Christians—what you saw with your eyes is the destiny of every agent, traitor and spy. And by Allah, we are not afraid of our job one

single bit, so go back with what's left of you before they return you to coffins—that is, if they still have filth left in their bodies.

And Allahhu Akbar! (Allah is the Greatest)

And Prayers to our mentor Muhammad and his family and friends altogether

The Armed Forces Unit of Ansar al Sunna

14 Rajab 1425  
30 August 2004

Muslim Brothers, do not have any mercy and leniency for those filthy people. They are people who left their houses and countries and traveled thousands of kilometers to work with the crusader American forces and to support them in their war against Islam and holy warriors, so this is thanks to God, their condition. "And they plot, and Allah plots and Allah is the best plotter." (—the Quran). So thank God, victor of His followers over the non-believers of Islam.

**Niraj Dawadi translated this statement posted on Ansar's website. **

WHILE KATHMANDU BURNS:  
A chopper flies overhead



nw/ss

# DAMAGE CONTROL

There are serious charges that the government failed to respond quickly enough to the violence, and when it did, the damage had already been done

BY SATISH JUNG SHAHI

**R**IOTERS RAN AMOK LAST WEEK after news of the brutal killing of 12 Nepali hostages in Iraq by the Army of Ansar al-Sunna spread like wildfire—thanks to FM radio stations and television newscasts.

Small groups of protestors had gathered on Tuesday night in Ratnapark, in New Baneshwore and in Kuponhole in front of Moonlight Consultancy, which had sent at least nine of the 12 Nepalis. Wednesday morning the protestors were back in force and the protests quickly spread in front of campuses in Tahachal and Lainchaur. By noon, uncontrollable mobs ruled the city. “There was no government presence,” charge most newspaper editorials. “Security presence was nil, even those policemen on the streets were just bystanders observing the mob.”

The violence spread to cities outside Kathmandu, and curfews were declared in Birtamod and Butwal. Nepali Muslim organizations had already clarified their stand Tuesday night, coming out against the Iraqi group, and sharing the nation’s grief at the death of the 12 Nepalis. By Friday the government had adopted some damage control measures: Ministers organized press meets even as Kathmandu and Lalitpur remained silent under the curfew imposed from Wednesday afternoon onwards.

Already, there are serious charges the government failed to respond quickly enough, and that by the time it did, the damage had been done. Many senior police officials tell us that police who had been deployed on the front line and mid-level officers had foreseen the situation and had demanded a curfew by 9:30 a.m. on Wednesday. The orders from their political masters at Singha Durbar

were to exercise maximum tolerance and to “go easy” on the rioters.

“This is where the government went wrong first,” says a police officer. He says the government failed to foresee the violence “right from the time when news of the killings in Iraq broke out to when people started gathering on Kathmandu



streets attacking manpower agencies.” This despite repeated warnings. The government on Friday said that everything happened within two hours and they were caught totally unawares. There were only about 700 police deployed to control the violent mob that numbered over 20,000.

The Cabinet decided to impose a curfew at 12:30 p.m., after, police officials tell us, strong insistence from Kathmandu’s Superintendent of Police Narayan Bastakoti, who was facing direct pressure from his ranks. The violence by

then was out of control. Young rioters had already looted, vandalized and set fire to over 100 manpower agencies and were setting their sights on anything Islamic, including airline offices of Qatar Airways, Saudi Arabian Airlines, Gulf Air, Pakistan International Airlines and the Egyptian Embassy. The office of Sahara Airlines, which was preparing to welcome its inaugural flight to Nepal that day, was also mobbed, probably because of its proximity to the Qatar Airways offices in Riddhi-Siddhi Bhawan at Kantipath.

In most places, it was a group of 15-20 rioters that did most of the damage while others cheered on and remained proud spectators to the event. “What can we do?” said 55-year-old Ramhari Maharjan, watching a manpower company being vandalized in Lazimpat. “This is very bad, but I don’t have the guts to interfere and speak out to that kind of a crowd,” he added, as a young rioter threw a television set from the window of the manpower office on the second floor to the street below. The television set hit a live wire on its way down, creating sparks that made the spectators cheer. Nearby, the Hotel Ambassador had closed its gates and shutters. Its owner, Yogendra Shakya, looked glum, and worried that tourism would be further hurt by the unrest.

In Siphel, near Kalopul, protestors set fire to former minister Chiranjivi Wagle’s residence and had moved on to Bishalnagar Chowk, where they burned down two manpower agencies. One of the agencies had already taken down its signboard, fearing attacks. A quick Army deployment prevented the protestors from moving on to former Home Minister Kamal Thapa’s residence.

By then, vandals had already entered two of the mosques in the heart of the capital, beside Ghantaghar and Ratnapark, after hurling stones and breaking windows. They lit the mosques on fire and attacked a mullah who with clasped hands asked the protestors to spare him.



“There was nothing we in the media could do,” says Ravi Manandhar, a photojournalist with Nepal Samacharpatra, who took pictures of the protests at major troubled spots all day. “The mob even chased us in various places, trying to snatch away our cameras.” Another photojournalist, Kiran Pandey, of Himal Khabarpatrika, had his camera broken in Maitighar but managed to escape unhurt on his motorcycle.

The situation at two media houses, Kantipur and Spacetime Network, was worse. Young rioters, who eyewitnesses said looked like rag pickers, hurled stones, broke windows and set fire to vehicles parked inside. They then vandalized office equipment. At Kantipur Television, news anchor Bijay Poudel was reading the live 12 o’clock news when transmission abruptly went off the air after he had nervously announced: “We’ve been attacked...We might go off air anytime.”

Soldiers entered the master control room to evacuate everyone and chased away the vandals who were targeting the studio. Kantipur TV came on air later at 2:30 p.m.

with a special news bulletin. Managing Director Kailash Siroiya charged that the security forces came 1 hour 55 minutes late, even as he made repeated calls to senior government authorities for help.

When Spacetime’s Channel Nepal came back on air the next day, they made similar charges. Another television and radio station, Image Channel, also went abruptly off air on Wednesday; its executives told us they had done so on themselves, fearing attacks like those on the other two private media houses.

The government confirmed the death of two protestors in police firing, one when the government-provided security officer fired to control the mob at the Egyptian Embassy. Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Prakash Sharan Mahat told media persons his ministry was giving out messages to the international community that things have been brought under control and assuring them that their property was safe.

But some charges are getting sticky: Many believe that the mobs could have been directed or controlled by “an un-

derground” force. Newspaper reports mentioned people calling on their mobiles and saying that the job was done after offices were ransacked.

Information and Communications Minister Mohammed Mohsin, who is also the government spokesperson and a Muslim, announced Friday that a six-member high-level committee, headed by former Supreme Court justice, Top Bahadur Rayamajhi, would investigate the all cases of vandalism and come up with a report within a month. “The committee will find out,” he said.

“The increasing violence has been fueled as government after government has failed to punish the culprits in similar protests,” said Pradip Giri, a senior leader of Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba’s own party, the NC-D, on the TV talk show Dishanirdesh on Thursday. But he was still willing to give the government the benefit of the doubt: “The current government’s incompetence will be proved if it fails to identify the guilty and take action against them.” **N**



**BREAKDOWN: Law and order in the Valley collapsed**

# the cost of **NOT** doing business



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*Come-n-r*

cure the release of their citizens, why couldn't we?" says another diplomat. The Nepali negotiators were not in touch with relevant entities and agencies. It seems they became too complacent about their appeals through al-Jazeera and a Sunni cleric.

"The Nepali team relied on a mullah, a religious leader, rather than tribal chieftains who enjoy more power and influence in divisive Iraq," says Niraj Dawadi, a scholar in international relations, who spent four years in Egypt and the Middle East. Many agree that it was the wrong approach. The government could have sent a team to Iraq with a Nepali Muslim on the team. Many now believe that Minister Mohammed Mohsin would have been a perfect choice to negotiate the release of the hostages.

The release might also have been secured if the international community had shown a little interest during the hostage crisis. It was incumbent upon the international community and the Arab world in particular to do something for the Nepalis hostages, but neither showed much concern. There were no statements or appeals prior to the killings, says INSEC's Subodh Pyakurel. But did the Nepali government mobilize its international goodwill? Even the Kenyan government had deployed a top envoy, Yusuf Nzibo, to Kuwaiti City to lead the East African nation's efforts for the release of three Kenyans in Iraq, which was eventually rewarded.

"We are not a powerful country like United States or India," says Niraj Dawadi. Help only comes spontaneously for citizens of powerful states. Dawadi says, "It wouldn't have been the same if it were Americans or even Indians." Even as the tragedy in Iraq continues to shock and humiliate Nepal, there are thousands of others people who are either already in Iraq or are stranded en-route.

The exact number of Nepalis there is still a mystery. "It is no secret that thousands of Nepalis are in Iraq," Minister of Labor and Transportation Raghuj Pant told reporters. But hasn't spelled out

clearly what he plans to do with those already in Iraq. "We will bring back those working in Iraq," said a government statement, but it didn't elaborate how.

"Iraq is probably the most dangerous place in the world right now, and if you want your employees to go there the compensation package must be commensurate with the risk," said Harold

Skipper, professor of risk management and insurance at Georgia State University in Atlanta, recently. The Americans are trying to provide reasonable cover to their employees working in conflict zones. But for Nepali workers, who aren't even supposed to be in Iraq, it's a no-win situation. They have neither that sort of compensation package nor reason-



**COLLATERAL DAMAGE:** Saudi Arabian Airlines, one of the five airline offices, targeted by protestors



**PEOPLE'S IRE:** Protestors also set fire to former minister Wagle's home in Siphel

able insurance coverage for working in a conflict zone. Until recently the highest insurance coverage required by Nepali law was Rs. 100,000. The danger is not new: Nepalis have been working in conflict zones for a long time. Following the Iraq episode, the government has raised the insurance requirement to Rs. 1 million for those working in Middle East. But there is still no word from the companies that employ them.

The torrent of violence appears to be receding, but the wound won't heal for a long time. Cleaning up the manpower business without drying up the flow of workers, and punishing the guilty as the hostages begged us to do are necessary and urgent first-aid. More importantly, it is still more incumbent on us as Nepalis deeply hurt and provoked by the barbaric act of the terrorists to maintain social harmony during such tough times and to embrace each other in solidarity. **N**



# STATE OF ANOMIE

The kingdom of Nepal, in its 235<sup>th</sup> year as a modern state, is on a dangerous march towards a fatal trinity of depressed economy, anarchic politics and a society in anomie

BY SWARNIM WAGLÉ

**E**MILE DURKHEIM USED THE Greek term “anomie” one hundred years ago to refer to conditions of disorder in a society undergoing rapid change, where rules, norms and expectations break down. The state of anomie is different from anarchy but related, with the latter concerning a political state where there is no monopoly of legitimate violence or power and states incline towards collapse in authority. Anomie, in today’s usage, is more of a social problem where there’s systematic violation of law and order and lack of shared norms in society, with little recognition of formal authority.

The kingdom of Nepal, in its 235<sup>th</sup> year of birth as a modern state, is on a dangerous march towards a fatal trinity of depressed economy, anarchic politics and a society in anomie. The term “failed state” is too vague a diagnosis, and while Nepal is still a long way from being the next Congo or Somalia, the fact that we openly discuss the possibility of the implosion of the Nepali state—where it exists as a legal entity without the means to exercise its legal authority—highlights a routine of disintegrating events each new week. Let us run through five incidences of just the past few days that contribute to this illustration.

## BROKEN DIPLOMACY

A weak state cannot assert itself internationally because it does not even have the self-confidence to marshal all resources and goodwill at its disposal. The government of Nepal failed to rescue 12 young hostages in Iraq, who were killed on the last day of August by Islamic zealots. Our diplomatic apparatus relied on ordinary methods to deal with an extraordinary crisis. The government lacked the imagination and the will in

its approach that reflects, actually, the lack of imagination and the will of its leadership. The enemies we faced were unreasonable fanatics who were probably going to kill the “followers of Buddha” anyway, but the national pain would have lessened if we had seen that the government had done all it could to save those unfortunate lives. In the final assessment, the government was not seen to be doing enough. In the least, a delegation led by a Muslim politician, such as Mohammed Mohsin, should have gone to Iraq and drawn on local help in person. Since the intensification of conflict within Nepal in 1998, we have lost on average 12 Nepali lives every other day and we lose many more to silent diseases each day, but the 12 men paraded on TV in Iraq tested our resolve on a new front, the will and the imagination of our country’s leadership and institu-

tions to protect Nepali lives in danger beyond our borders. And we failed.

## THE RIOT OF SEPTEMBER ONE

The riots that followed in Kathmandu in protest of these killings went on to highlight the hollow presence of the state even in the heart of the capital. If one argues that the shameful destruction of a mosque, labor exporting agencies and airline offices happened too swiftly and spontaneously for the security forces to be mobilized in time, how does one explain the astounding delays in responding to the attacks against two big media complexes and private residences? I personally witnessed crowd behavior and police reaction outside the Egyptian Embassy in Pulchowk. Characteristically, the mob was a rude, disorganized, leaderless motley of a dozen vandals, who were more intent on seeking

pleasure in destruction than in making a point of solidarity through protests. If a modest contingent of armed police and Army had arrived early, staked its presence, cordoned the embassy and dispersed the crowd, the destruction of property, the killing of a civilian and the indelible diplomatic stain of our incapability to protect the person and property of our foreign guests could have been avoided. The security forces proved that they are incompetent in controlling untoward incidents even when they occur within reach. Their resources are spread thin, yes, but if citizens see them merely as conspicuous onlookers in situations where rioters attack symbols of faith and freely ransack private property, they make a statement on the larger func-



tional problem of the Nepali state: The very people who the state hires to lend it authority don't believe in it enough.

### GIRIJA AT THE GATE

Even if there was no conspiracy on the part of the Army to humiliate Girija Prasad Koirala, as alleged, by curtailing without prior information his VIP perk of special access to the airport, Koirala was right to ponder publicly the possibility of designs on the part of the Army even at the risk of appearing a bit paranoid. At 82, he has that license, for the different class dynamics and socio-political histories of the people who lead the Army, including the King, and elected people's leaders, have long produced mutual distrust and contempt. If the Army wanted to test popular reaction to Koirala's "mistreatment," as the Congress believes, it was a misadventure; but the nature of the incident indicates that it was a failure of various wings within the "Unified Command" to coordinate their information and intelligence, rather than a sinister ploy to tease Koirala. This too, though, is regrettable at a time when not only so much resource is being funneled in the name of security, but their underperformance is paradoxically being rewarded by increasing autonomy from, and decreasing accountability to, the already helpless cabinet.

### HIGHWAY LOWS

The capital blockaded or not, the 36-kilometer-long Mugling-Narayanghat highway is a symbol of the sorry state of the nation itself. Just a few years ago, this was one of the best segments in all of Nepal's tarred roads. Last year, the monsoon landslides decimated the highway, but given its vital role in connecting the capital to the plains and the ports, it was hoped that the road would be fixed immediately after the rains stopped. Traveling on the same road exactly one year later, I saw last week that not much had improved—the usual journey of one hour took four. What have the concerned agencies been doing for the past 12 months despite repeated urgings in the press? Is this yet another fall-out of the absence of local elected bodies that did such a splendid job over the past 12 years in aggregating local interests and exerting pressure on the center to deliver



**HIGHWAY BLUES:** Landslides have decimated Nepal's lifelines

public services? Has suspension of civil democracy, then, also led to suspension of civil works?

### DIGITAL DREAM

One normally expects political leaders to dream big because they have the primary mandate and the means to help realize the dreams. Nothing wrong if Binod Chaudhary, the Wai Wai industrialist, does the dreaming for the government, by kick-starting a healthy debate on Nepal's potential of attaining double-digit growth. While lauding his initiative, it is also worth wondering if anyone has actually done the necessary math with logarithm tables on the side. Even unrealistically capping our population at 25 million, to attain an average monthly per capita income of Rs. 10,000 (US\$ 1,600 per person per annum, not adjusted for purchasing power parity), Nepal would need to sustain a double digit growth rate of at least 10 percent for 18 consecutive years, while simultaneously improving its pattern of

wealth distribution. To borrow a Newsweek columnist's memorable phrase, there is only a "minor inconvenience of massive inconsistency" in selling such a dream. Not outright impossible, but if it happens, the world will have seen its third biggest miracle after the birth of Lord Buddha in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. and the invention of steam engine adapted to rotary motion in the 1770s. Even if the government fails to lead intellectual debates on development or explain its failures in facilitating fast growth, it should ideally be polite enough to temper its citizens' tall tales and expectations, just so there isn't much disappointment down the road. And I haven't even mentioned the red elephants in the room who have just declared that they will only negotiate peace with the King, not the government he formed, complicating our likely fortunes further. **N**

*Views expressed in this column are personal, and do not necessarily reflect those of institutions the writer is affiliated with.*

# PRESSURE MOUNTING

Don't hold your breath waiting for peace talks

BY JOHN NARAYAN PARAJULI

**T**HE SAME DAY THE GOVERNMENT said it would call on the Maoists for peace talks, the Maoists decided in a brainstorming session to say no to any peace talks with the present government. "We shall be issuing a call for talks to the Maoists in a formal manner," said the government's spokesman, Information and Communication Minister Mohammed Mohsin. Even before the call was issued, the Maoists had said nay.

"We are disappointed by their refusal," says Subodh Pyakurel, president of INSEC. He says the country cannot withstand further carnage. The Maoist announcement flatly contradicted repeated hints and leaks that the government was in touch with the Maoists. A Maoist central committee meeting held in Hapure, Dang, the site of the previous failed peace talks, formally decided to refrain from holding any dialogue with the Deuba government. Prime Minister Deuba still claims his government is making serious but discreet preparations for talks. He has repeatedly turned down calls to declare a unilateral ceasefire, saying it takes two hands to clap. Ministers in the Deuba government continue to speak as if they have already have an open channel of informal communication with the Maoists. That's apparently untrue.

While declining to talk with the government, the Maoists did say that they were willing to hold talks with the parties that have been agitating against "regression" and, most importantly, with the King directly. The meeting also implicitly demanded that the King make

his stance clear about the Maoists' "people's war." The Maoists' willingness to talk with the King is a clear and startling hint that they might enter a power-sharing agreement. If both the extreme right and left sit together to write a constitution, it probably wouldn't do away with the monarchy as the Maoists want, but it would necessarily trim the King's powers and incorporate some of the radical reforms the ultra-nationalists want.

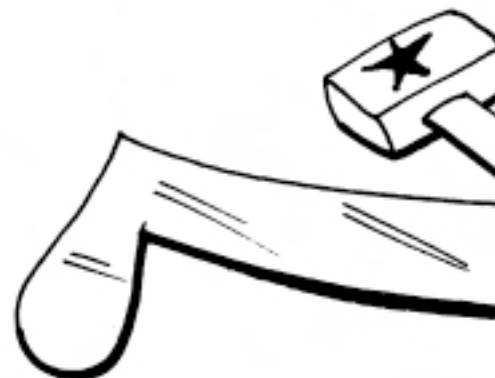
After the Maoists withdrew their blockade, speculations were rife that informal talks with the government had started. There were reasons to believe such speculations. Though it is an unconventional prelude to a peace process, the Maoists have often talked tough before growing mellow towards talks. The government had said it would consider removing the terrorist tag if the Maoists put out peace feelers. Some were even recalling how the last ceasefire was brokered: It came within 72 hours after the assassination of IGP Krishna Mohan Shrestha in January 2003.

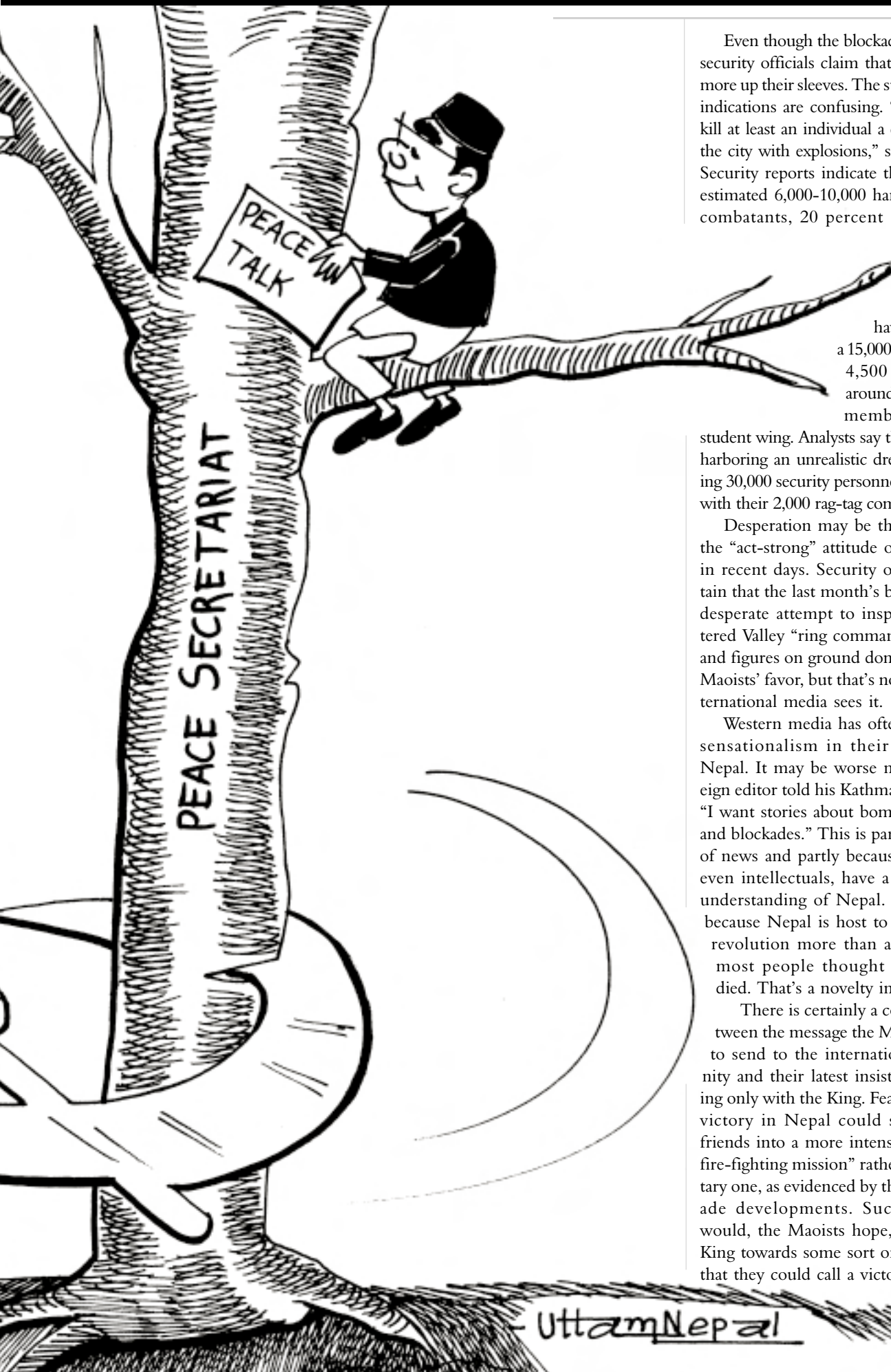
The latest twist in the story comes barely a week after Maoists psychological offensive on the Valley. When we reported last week about the blockade, there was every indication to believe that the blockade may eventually edge the Maoists closer towards the negotiating table. Even civil society leaders were upbeat.

The Maoists' flat refusal to talk with the government has dashed those hopes and turned silver linings into dark clouds. Their move may not be conciliatory at all. It certainly makes the Maoists appear very confident. "The Maoists have become arrogant about their fire-power," says INSEC's Pyakurel. This may be the

reason why the Maoists are uninterested in starting the peace process now.

Optimism about the aborted blockade may have been misplaced. The coverage of the event from international media, at least, seems to tell more of the Maoists strategy for the blockade than most of the homegrown analysis. "Maoists rebels may be only a year or two away from a victory," writes Gwyne Dyer in the Sydney Morning Herald. Dyer's comments sums up the impression that the international media hammered home. That is exactly what the Maoists wanted the international community to believe; decision makers in the west largely depend on international media for their facts about Nepal. The blockade looked like a failure from here, but that is not the message that was played in international media. Dyer writes, "...and for a week nothing moved on the roads in or out of the Kathmandu valley. They [Maoists] lifted the blockade and let the city have fresh food again—but not because they had to."





Even though the blockade is over now, security officials claim that Maoists have more up their sleeves. The suggestions and indications are confusing. "They plan to kill at least an individual a day or to rock the city with explosions," says an official. Security reports indicate that out of the estimated 6,000-10,000 hardcore Maoist combatants, 20 percent are deployed

around the Valley. The Maoists reportedly have in addition a 15,000-strong militia, 4,500 cadres and around half a million members in their

student wing. Analysts say the Maoists are harboring an unrealistic dream of defeating 30,000 security personnel in the Valley with their 2,000 rag-tag combatants.

Desperation may be the real root of the "act-strong" attitude of the Maoists in recent days. Security officials maintain that the last month's blockade was a desperate attempt to inspire their battered Valley "ring command." The facts and figures on ground don't seem in the Maoists' favor, but that's not how the international media sees it.

Western media has often resorted to sensationalism in their coverage of Nepal. It may be worse now. One foreign editor told his Kathmandu reporter, "I want stories about bombs, barricades and blockades." This is partly the nature of news and partly because westerners, even intellectuals, have a very shallow understanding of Nepal. But it is also because Nepal is host to a communist revolution more than a decade after most people thought communism died. That's a novelty in itself.

There is certainly a connection between the message the Maoists wanted to send to the international community and their latest insistence on talking only with the King. Fears of a Maoist victory in Nepal could send Nepal's friends into a more intense "diplomatic fire-fighting mission" rather than a military one, as evidenced by the post-blockade developments. Such a mission would, the Maoists hope, pressure the King towards some sort of compromise that they could call a victory. **N**



# Collateral Damage

As long as those at the helm are preoccupied with militarization, Nepal will continue to sustain collateral damage on many fronts. The 12 Nepalis executed in Iraq are only the latest example.

BY UJOL SHERCHAN

**T**he execution of 12 Nepali migrant workers in Iraq points up a dangerous trend that has its genesis in Nepal. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out if Nepali migrant workers are still continuing to defy the government's long-standing order and entering Iraq en masse. Chances are, hapless Nepali migrants are being duped into heading for Iraq by unscrupulous agents in Nepal in cahoots with those in the Middle East.

The government's failure to respond swiftly and decisively to the hostage crisis in Iraq after the CNN, BBC and national media picked up on what al-Jazeera TV broadcast indicates a deeply-entrenched pattern: Deal with the exigencies rather than their root causes, and respond belatedly and half-heartedly to crisis after crisis rather than try to prevent it in the first place.

Over the years, hundreds of innocents have disappeared or been killed by both the Maoist rebels and security forces. But has Deuba's present government shown any genuine interest in talking peace with the rebel leaders, with or without the U.N. mediation?

The truth is, as long as those at the helm are preoccupied with militarizing the country and prolonging the war on the Maoist insurgency rather than resolving it, Nepal will continue to sustain collateral damage on many fronts, because everything else ranks a very distant second priority in their scheme of things. The 12 Nepalis executed in Iraq are only the latest example.

The building of dams unilaterally by India on their side of the border that inundate the Nepali side must surely rank a very distant second priority. The plundering, raping and burning of villages and villagers in Tarai by both local and Indian dacoits must surely rank a very distant second priority.

The landslides and flashfloods that have displaced hundreds and destroyed roads and bridges during the recent monsoon must rank a very distant second priority. The extortion rackets perpetrated by cops in civil dress as well as by fake Maoists and mafias that have hurt small and medium enterprises must surely rank a very distant second priority.

The trafficking in women as well as the worst forms of child labor must rank a very distant second priority. The smuggling of wildlife parts and medicinal and aromatic plants that are threatened or endangered, as well as drugs, must rank a very distant second priority.

The citizenship rights of the marginalized and Terails who've lived in this country for generations, not to mention the festering refugee problem in eastern Nepal, must surely rank a very distant second priority.

The demand of the janjatis, the dalits, the Terails, and the adivasis to be recognized by the state on their own terms must surely rank a very

distant second priority. The demand of the British Gurkhas to be treated on par with their British counterparts in terms of salary, pensions and other benefits must rank a very distant second priority.

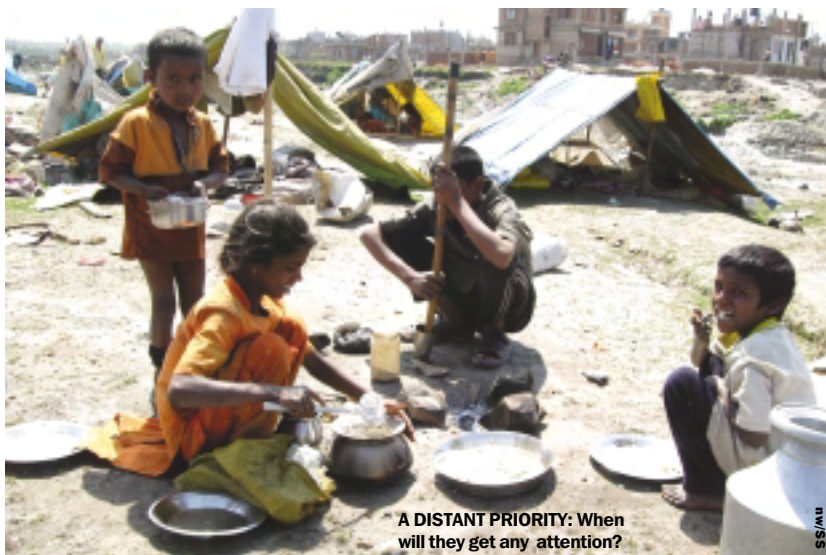
The rights of the women and their inclusion in all spheres of mainstream Nepal on par with their male counterparts must rank a very distant second priority. The deaths from preventable diseases and from hunger in the hinterland must rank a very distant second priority.

The internally displaced, the increasing number of landless and homeless and the rehabilitation of the Kamaiyas must surely rank a very distant second priority. The pitiful state of the state's physical and human infrastructure as well as governance must rank a very distant second priority.

Ad infinitum, ad nauseam!

The masters of war in both camps have systematically hijacked "development" and turned the average Nepali into a pawn in the on-going power tussle, resulting in a mass exodus of the internally displaced, the underemployed and unemployed. The 12 dead in Iraq, many more rotting in prisons in Bangkok and the thousands stranded in Mumbai are only a tip of the iceberg and, I'm afraid, a preview of things to come.

When will the masters sit down to resolve the mother of all problems—one that diverts scarce resources from all other pressing priorities that are growing in gravity and magnitude by the minute? Recently, the



A DISTANT PRIORITY: When will they get any attention?

Royal Nepal Army demanded an additional Rs. 11 billion. More guns or more butter? Twelve died in Iraq when they were forced to look for bread and butter (jobs) there. A serious disconnect here.

What is alarming about today's Nepal is that butter, which stands for everything else, including peace, security and prosperity that guns alone cannot provide, has increasingly become exactly that: a very distant second priority. **N**



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# More Equal

To Koirala, the alleged infringement of his freedom of movement was undemocratic, all right. But what of his party's insistence that everybody stay home the next day to protest?

BY JOGENDRA GHIMIRE

**O**n Saturday, August 28, Nepali Congress President Girija Prasad Koirala was prevented by some junior security officers at Kathmandu airport from taking his—and his bodyguards'—vehicles into the boarding area. The security personnel reportedly asked him to leave his vehicle at the parking area and walk into the terminal building, just like every other passenger does, because they had no prior information about a VIP movement.

Public criticism of the incident, especially coming out of the Koirala camp, has a different spin to the story. The security personnel told the Nepali Congress supremo that they had been instructed “from above” to prevent him from boarding the Bhairahawa-bound flight, something the Royal Nepal Army has denied. Exact details of the exchange between the airport security officials and Koirala will hopefully be made public by the special investigation team comprising senior civilian and security officers, which was swiftly appointed by the government. Even in the absence of the exact details of the exchange, it is possible to look into the two related questions of freedom of movement this incident raises.

Clearly angered by the treatment he received at the hands of the junior officials, Koirala told the mainstream press in Kathmandu that the incident was an infringement of his right of free movement, guaranteed to every citizen of this country. And, in an ill-considered reaction to the incident, the student and youth wings of Koirala's Nepali Congress declared a general strike on Sunday, forcing everything from vehicular movement to schools to businesses to a complete shutdown.

In fact, while Koirala's statement about the infringement of his freedom of movement was misplaced, the actions of his young followers—and his condoning their acts—were outright condemnable. One can not help reach that conclusion even if one is willing to give him the benefit of the doubt for the timing of the incident, which came three days before the Supreme Court was scheduled to give its verdict on Koirala's petition challenging the authority of the CIAA to question him on charges of corruption.

The former prime minister has apparently been given to understand (wrongly) that he has a constitutionally protected right to drive all the way to his aircraft while commoners cover the same distance on foot. As a

matter of fact, the special treatment that important public figures like him get at the airport is not their constitutional right but merely a privilege—a perk that they may be able to enjoy if they fulfill the conditions associated with its use. Like every other citizen of this country, Koirala too has the right to move around the country, which includes not only the right of locomotion but also the right to reside at any corner of the kingdom. Unless the decision of the security officials to disallow his vehicles inside the airport seriously impaired his ability to board the aircraft, it is difficult to make a plausible argument that the incident actually infringed upon Koirala's right of free movement. It was he who had decided not to board

the flight and instructed his driver to return to his residence.

Even more disturbing than his misunderstanding of his right to free movement is the way he and his young activists reacted to the incident. It could surely have been handled in a more dignified manner. While Koirala asserted his fundamental right of free movement to make a case against the security officers and accused the entire security machinery of the country to have conspired to cause the infringement, he clearly declined to consider the infringement of the rights of free movement of, and the serious hardships it could cause to, millions of Nepalis who were forced to stay home the day after the incident.

I am not suggesting that Koirala should not have voiced his opposition to the treatment which he received at the hands of the officers. Right or wrong, he has every right to criticize the security arrangements at the airport and to advocate that people like him should be allowed to drive all the

way to the footsteps of the aircraft. He can also demand that VIPs like him should be given a red carpet welcome everywhere he goes, although whether or not he actually gets that treatment is a different matter altogether.

What he does not have is the authority to infringe upon the freedom of so many citizens of this country. As somebody said so aptly, “Your freedom to stretch your arms ends where my nose begins.” For the leader of a political party, which has taken an official decision against bandas, the possibility of hitting others' noses should have been an issue of serious concern. Instead, the 82-year-old decided that he would be better off humoring his youthful activists, who wanted a banda. And the political master duly obliged. **N**



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# DE-EXOTICIZING NEPAL

BY AJIT BARAL

*"The mind can make heaven of hell, and a hell of heaven"*

John Milton

THE WEST HAS SEEN NEPAL through rose-colored glasses and a series of distorted stereotypes ever since the country opened up to the outside world in 1950. The glasses have come off, but stereotypes—different ones, but equally inaccurate—continue to dominate the world's perception of us.

When the first Peace Corps volunteers came to Nepal, this was still a rural country; many people were simple and naïve. These volunteers were the first to spread, by word of mouth, the myth of a country unspoiled by modernity. Next came mountaineers eager to scale Nepal's high and glorious mountains, and with them came journalists to report about the ascents. The journalists' reports wrote about a transformation of sorts that they experienced in the enchanting landscapes of Nepal. In a recent special double issue of the *Times*, Jan Morris, the celebrated travel writer, wrote about "a Nirvana of a different kind I did transiently enter half a century ago, when I was on my way back to Kathmandu from Mount Everest, where I had been writing for the *Times* of London about the first climbers ever to make it to the top." It's not just travel reporting that has romanticized Nepal but also guidebooks.

Prakash A. Raj, the Lonely Planet writer on Nepal, says guidebooks exoticize places. "I myself have exoticized Nepal," he admits. Travel writings made Nepal famous as "Shangri-La country," a tropical paradise. In the late 1960s, budget travelers invaded Nepal. They were mostly young people

from the west, popularly known as the hippies, who were getting increasingly disillusioned with the metropolitan culture. They came to Nepal and India in search of eastern mysticism, which globe-trotting Indian swamis had popularized in the west.

Abhi Subedi, professor of English at Tribhuvan University, hobnobbed with the hippies in the late 1960s and the 1970s. He says, "What the hippies found in Nepal was all anti-western: primitive culture, simple people and antique artifacts." And they liked Nepal all the more for it. Moreover, hippies were heavily into drugs, and drugs were freely available—LCD, heroin, hash, barbiturates, amphetamines, you name it.

The low-budget seekers of nirvana and dope often went broke. Trading sex for drugs was common, justified by a superficial understanding of tantrism as well as rebellion. No wonder Nepal was seen as the country of free sex and drugs. Films like *Hare Krishna Hare Ram*, with its portrayal of a drug-crazed blond nymphet roaming around the temples of Kathmandu with hashish puffing hippies, set the stereotype firmly in the popular imagination.

Enterprising Nepalese businessmen did help popularize the stereotypes by naming their restaurants "Tantrik" or "Nirvana Garden" and by splattering yin-yang symbols liberally about and by having hash brownies and acid pie on their menus.

Western scholarship in Nepal has also helped romanticize it. In its first editorial, the journal "Studies in Nepali History and Society" wrote that "anthropological work on Nepal has been regionally skewed toward the mid-hills and the mountains," and that "a result is an exoticization that doesn't aid our understanding of Nepal." Scholar James

Fischer, a foreign expert on Nepal, has criticized western scholarship for romanticizing Nepal. Suresh Dhakal, an anthropologist at Tribhuvan University, says, "Western ethnography on Nepal is a romanticized ethnography." He says it's the nature of ethnography to romanticize things; if you don't romanticize the subject, it won't be a topic for ethnographic study. Maybe that's why lots of ethnographic studies have been on the Sherpas.



Until recently, foreigners never heard anything bad about Nepal except that it was a poor country. Whatever else they knew about the place was good. And they had held very romantic notions: "Never Ending Peace And Love", a Zone of

**A** longtime contributor to Time magazine, **Pico Iyer** is best known for his travel book "Video Night in Kathmandu." His most recent book is a collection of essays, "Sun After Dark." Iyer answered Ajit Baral's questions from "a back-street Internet cafe in Saigon, surrounded by whirling sirens and raucous bars."

**What was your image of Nepal before coming here in 1985? Did you find the Nepal of your imagination similar to the actual Nepal?**

I knew painfully little about Nepal before I arrived (in 1985, to write about it for my first book, Video Night in Kathmandu), which meant that every moment was a surprise and an education. I knew something of Tibet, from my reading, and a little about India from

my family, but Nepal was the uncharted and somewhat mysterious ground between, and I relished the fact that I came to it with so few preconceptions. Any I might have had, it [Nepal] would have quickly dispelled, as all the best places do.

**What image of present day Nepal do you get from the media? After the Maoist insurgency started, lots of foreign journalists have parachuted into Nepal and started portraying Nepal as the Maoist country.**

As you suggest, it is in the nature of the media to stress only what is exceptional, and often what is dramatic and disruptive, while ignoring all the lives that are continuing as they always have and everything that is going right. So in-

deed most of what I hear and read about Nepal these days has to do with turbulence, unrest, Maoist aggression and general unease. But having worked in the media for 22 years I know to take everything I read in the media with several grains of salt. So I'm hoping that much of what I most cherish about Nepal, in terms of the sweetness and good nature of its people, continues as it always has, and that many people are living in a state undisturbed by the few dramas we read about far away.



**What do you think travel writers do, subvert or bolster the stereotypical images of a place?**

The very nature of travel writing, as of

travel, of course, is to explore every expectation, stereotype and simplification, and to lead the reader deeper into uncertainty, nuance and humanity, all the stuff that can't be fit into a headline or a TV screen. These days, I feel, more and more of us are hemmed in by the images we get from screens large and small, from newspapers and movies; the travel writer has to propel the reader out of her assumptions, and into the midst of a confounding and therefore fascinating reality. Every trip for me is a journey into a question that gives way to a deeper question, and a deeper one, till one arrives at the unanswerable. In that sense, the places one visits one never leaves, because one can no longer imagine, one understands them.

Travel writing only has meaning if it leaves stereotypes at home. **N**

a foreigner who is a longtime resident of Nepal said, without wanting to be named, "The only romanticization of Nepal that I see going on now is of the past." He added, "Aba Nepal khattam bhayo. Pahile ramro thiyo (Nepal's ruined. It was nice before),' goes the common refrain."

Nepal is far away from the lives and concerns of Europeans, Americans and Japanese. They may never

see us as we are without coming to visit, but we had better foster stereotypes of a happy and peaceful Shangri-La. At least then the rest of the world will feel it's safe to come see for themselves. **N**

Peace, the happy smiling people and religious tolerance. But of late these notions have been losing ground. The western media has exaggerated and sensationalized coverage of events in Nepal: The hijack of an Indian airplane, the Hrithik

Roshan incident, the Maoist insurgency, the recent blockade and this week's riots over the killing of 12 Nepalis in Iraq. The exaggerated coverage of these incidents has given the world an impression that Nepal is going to the dogs. Rightly,





**KHUMA:** A play 1 hr 10 minutes, Gurukul (Balkrishna Sama theater, story by Bikram Shah, dramatised by Anup Baral and Khagendra Prasad, directed by Anup Baral, actors: Anup, Anuradha, Saugat, Sarita, Suresh and Asha)

## Nobody's Child

“Khuma” is a moving play that conveys the agony of Nepal and, if seen widely enough, could get people talking about important topics

**BY BELA MALIK**

The trauma of those caught between armed rebels and armed counter-insurgents is now a routine in the “killing terraces” of Nepal. Films have chronicled the misery of helpless citizens. Poems and stories make poignant statements of helpless fury. Artists have etched the blood on

canvas. The play “Khuma” adds to the expression of artistic rage. It is emotive. It is universal. It speaks for all humanity, or at least what is left of it in a world that forgets its history and forsakes its kin with such ease and frequency.

The production uses creativity to powerful effect and includes multimedia—music, movement, audio-vi-

suals, sounds, lighting and installation art. The ambience prepares the audience to experience the situation in which a young girl, Khuma, finds herself. The director uses universalizing elements to portray a personal story. These include the unisex costume of the “chorus” and their actions, which are not culture-specific. The music, stage setting and chorus help to make the play more real in its symbolism. The terms “insecurity of life” and the “lack of the rule of law” spring out from the pages of human rights reports and embody themselves in the spirited adolescence of Khuma. Tradition and custom are brought in to convey the agony of a situation where people simply disappear or go missing. They could be anyone: school students, shepherds, all and sundry...especially the poor innocent dispensable sundry.

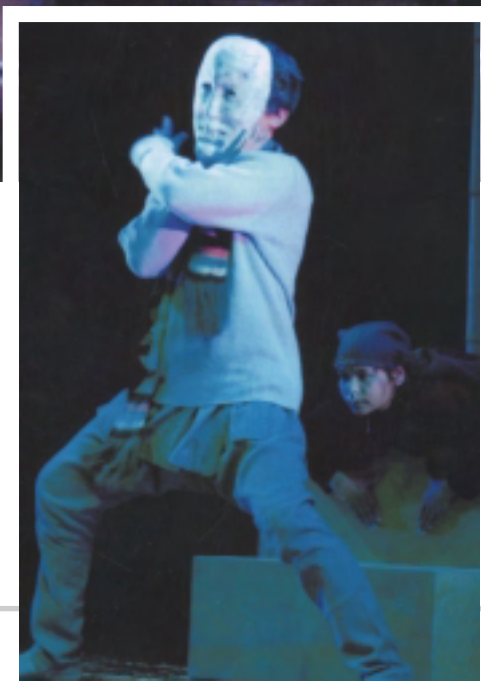
The play is a slice in the life of Khuma, whose father was killed by the police. Her mother died of “heartbreak” after hearing the news of his death. One brother has gone to *Kala Pahad*, the Black Mountain, i.e., India; the other brother told Khuma not to leave for the Black Mountain with the first brother, but to stay back in the village, and he’d see her through her schooling. Since then he has left for the jungle, gone underground with the Maoists. On her own, she cannot study and keep her house. Hers is a single-child-headed household. She cannot go to school.

She lives alone and helps her co-villagers in Thabang, Rolpa district, the hotbed of the insurgency. She visits people. They don’t visit her. Her only visitor is a schoolteacher. He is, in fact, her only friend. Their relationship is beautiful. She speaks Nepali, though she uses many phrases in Kham Magar that are not comprehensible to “sar,” the schoolteacher. Through their interactions, we learn of her family’s history, we are told of the Maoists coming at night to cut the trees of her apple orchard so that the terrain is not threatening to them, we hear her innocent questions and share her dreams to study and become like “sar,” and we share in the helpless fury of the teacher’s inability to answer her questions or to do anything to help her realize her dreams. The play never closes. In a sense it con-

tinues, and it forces the audience to think. What do we do with the countless Khumas, the little children who are affected in some way, including getting injured, killed, orphaned, or disappearing because of the armed conflict?

This is a difficult topic with a difficult script. The need to maintain a balance in the dramatization of a story that is written by a security officer is a major challenge. To a great extent the play has succeeded in this purpose. In places there is ambiguity and a lack of realism. The structure of the play allows for a more realistic portrayal of life in the countryside. It could hint at why rural persons go to the jungle or to the Black Mountain. It could include the different ways in which the Maoists and the security forces induce fear. The Maoists could be more authentically depicted. They are armed, yes. But they are also ideological. There are crucial differences between the state security forces and the armed Maoist cadre. Both can be equally ruthless and cruel and instill fear, but the modes and objects of the creation of fear are different. That distinction has to be maintained for the play to be universally appreciated even outside Kathmandu in the villages, towns and districts of the country.

And this play has to be taken beyond the metropolis. It can initiate discussion on militarization in Nepal, on human rights abuses, on impunity, on children and armed conflict and on many other topics that are usually restricted to starred hotels and that have become the preserve of the intellectual and marquee-star NGO activist. This reviewer has seen an earlier version of "Khuma," "Anmaya." Its framework obviously allows for more innovation. Perhaps this play can be a continuously evolving one, with more



elements being included and some further refinements, after discussion and feedback from wider and more grassroots audiences. Maybe more than one play can emerge from the same structure. Will it be possible to have one play for an international audience, one for the more privileged in Nepal, another for the Midwest, another for the East and so on, with the story remaining the same? The artists certainly seem up to the task. **N**

# Gay Jatra

Most take freedom of expression and association for granted. Gays, lesbians and transsexuals can't.

BY AJIT BARAL

**G**ai Jatra is celebrated every year to commemorate the dead, but it isn't just about mourning. It's also about merrymaking, barbed jests and public fanfare. On Gai Jatra, people come out decked in colorful costumes, fancy headgear and papier-mâché masks; they make the rounds of the city and have fun. For the last two years the Blue Diamond Society, an organization that assists homosexuals and cross-dressers and offers advice on health and sexuality, particularly HIV prevention, has held its own Gai Jatra procession.

On Gai Jatra last Tuesday the society and about 150 gay people, some cross-dressed and others wearing masks or holding placards, marched from the Sanchayakosh building. The procession went through Ason and Indrachowk and concluded at Hanuman Dhoka, where society members lit 108 candles in memory of people who have died of HIV. Sunil Babu Pant of the society explained, "Those who die of HIV don't get respect. This is our way of giving respect to them on a day when the dead are remembered."

The society's choice to organize their procession on Gai Jatra seems apt. Nepalis have used Gai Jatra as a forum to express dissent and anger since the days of the Ranas and the Panchayat, when people had no freedom of speech. Since the reinstatement of democracy, Gai Jatra's importance has shrunk because people now don't have to wait for an annual event to vent their frustration and anger: They can do that every day. But for a minority community like gays, lesbians and transsexuals, the situation is different. They don't have the right to live the way they choose, and they don't have freedom of association. Just



a few weeks ago the Supreme Court ordered the government to show why the society should "not be closed." What better place and time to speak out than Gai Jatra? Still, some people criticize the community for desecrating the festival.

There is a certain sacredness and solemnity attached to the festival. Gai Jatra's celebration of the dead began when King Pratap Malla's youngest son was thrown from his elephant and killed. Pratap Malla called for both the procession of bereaved households and the following merriment to console his queen. The cow is important, for Hindus who are bereaved worship the cow in the belief that she will help the dead cross the Vaitarani, the mythical river of agony, to Vaikuntha, the abode of Lord Vishnu. That's why some people don't like the Blue Diamond Society coming out and celebrating too, even in remembrance of the dead.

Last year traditionalists questioned why the society targets Gai Jatra to raise awareness when they can do that on any day. Panta explains, "We organize sensitization programs throughout the year. Our Gai Jatra becomes visible because it is organized in public." And not everyone is offended. Many people think that the BDS members were just doing what others were doing and also raising awareness about gays and HIV/AIDS. The placards they carried proclaimed their right to live their life the way they like and their right of association. They distributed condoms to bystanders as they marched. Panta says, Gai Jatra provides a cover for people who haven't been able to cross-dress to come of the closet and into the streets, since cross-dressing and cross-gender games have been a part of the festival for years.

For the members of the gay community, Gai Jatra is just not an opportunity to raise awareness, get their voices heard or cross-dress. It's an opportunity to be with other gay people and make merry. Pradeep Yadav came all the way from Janakpur to be with the community. Yadav heard about the BDS Jatra last year and wanted to participate in it. This year he came. He was beaming with excitement, partly because he was playing Ram and partly because he was among his own. Isn't everyone entitled to that? **N**



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# Bothered And Bewildered

Royal Nepal Army wants to go shopping. Again. High on the list is a VVIP flight Bell helicopter. I guess, the VVIPs, lucky people, will whirl around, overflying all those confusing traffic islands and security checks.

BY KUNAL LAMA

**A**s it happened, I did get to watch Sangina Baidya's fight. Unfortunately, it wasn't the golden Olympic moment I had waited for. Sangina looked defensive and tentative from the word go, whereas her opponent, Shih Hsin Chen from Taiwan, had a cocky smile, maybe even a smirk, right from the beginning, and the protective head-and-face gear did nothing to hide it. The itch to slap was irresistible. This urge surfaced again when NTV Metro aired a commercial right between the rounds, eating into the live telecast of what was already an extremely brief taekwondo encounter. Clumsy timing, or a case of can't-watch-this-a-second-more nervousness? Nothing to be ashamed of, though, Sangina. You got to Athens on your own merit, and that alone deserves our admiration. Wish you had kicked and punched the bejesus out of that precocious Taiwanese, however. Boy, that would have felt good.

Royal Nepal Army wants to go shopping. Again. High on the list is a VVIP flight Bell helicopter that is going to cost around 700 million rupees (around 9 million US dollars). I guess, the VVIPs, lucky people, will whirl around, overflying all those confusing traffic islands and security checks clogging up the crumbling highways. Pity those wonderful, newly-acquired stretch limousines—3 or 6 in all?—will now mostly idle in the garage. I must say a sense of patriotic pride welled up within me when I was a witness to the stately procession of one of these vehicles (couldn't make out if it was a Bentley or a Jaguar; Rolls Royce it most certainly was not) on Durbar Marg a couple of months ago. Wow, such a long, magnificent, shiny, low limousine, gliding weightlessly, silently and effortlessly on our very own capital streets! (The only nagging thought that destroyed the magic moment was whether these supercars could be parked easily and sensibly in front of New Dish in Khichapokhari, when one has an insatiable hunger for momos?) Wonder if this Bell helicopter is a stretch version of the normal, cheaper ones? Considering the state of the Valley roads and national highways in almost all parts of this benighted kingdom, it does make sense, doesn't it, that one should fly rather than drive, when there

is the luxury of an option? When we citizens travel, stretch is certainly not an option in those rickety, speeding, junk-metal death machines. Fold is. Hence those signs, "2x2 Folding Seats." The seats don't fold: The passengers must.

Going back to RNA's shopping list, one does question, however inappropriately and a tad unorthodoxly, if the Army should not invest more money in their men? Specifically, eye tests in view of the recent incident at TIA. It appears that Army personnel have a tinted view of all that they observe, which, come to think, explains a lot of things. It's high time that the soldiers are given the vision they desperately lack. Tested and corrected, the ability to recognize and respect leaders of unequal national importance, and to allow them to proceed on to Bhairawaha, without let or hindrance, is a mandatory exercise in the observance of democracy and constitutional fallacy. It also helps forestall the youths of the country to strike at will and wantonly destroy unstretched public vehicles.

Yup, out of the blockade and straight into a banda. Kathmandu residents have had enough but, somehow, their voice did not rise high enough above the din of the striking slogans and the pall of smoking tyres and vehicles. And how could it too since most Kathmanduites were comfortably stretched before their favourite Indian soap operas, or bunched around multipacks of cards engaged in their favorite form of "marriage"? Bandas

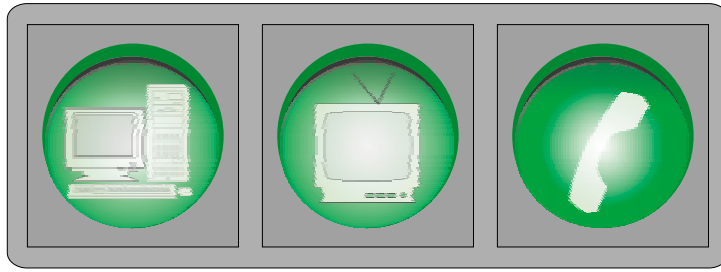
are a nuisance, and a huge drain on the economy of the nation. Everyone hurts. Ingeniously, most of us have learned to extract maximum benefit out of these enforced closures. And when one thinks, amidst all the chaos and uncertainty strewn around us, bandas do seem to bear advantages: Quality time with the family and friends; streets free of noise and pollution; discoveries of unknown bahals and temples; an ideal time to try PSI's newly-launched Sure Home Pregnancy Test Kit. Quality time with the family, re-



**FOR CITIZENS: Rickety, speeding, junk-metal death machines?**

member?

There was a terribly sweet story the other day of an 83-year-old Tamang man marrying a 72-year-old Thakuri woman. The reasons given by the man were that they were in love and that they wanted to spend the rest of their lives together. The disappointment of Sangina's failure, the absurdity of an advanced helicopter for VVIP flights and the destruction of property and daily lives by student-led bandas were somehow rendered whimsical and petty by this heart-warming story of two people in love deep enough to get married, caste and age no barriers. Bet your bottom dollar that PSI's latest product was not on their wedding list. **N**



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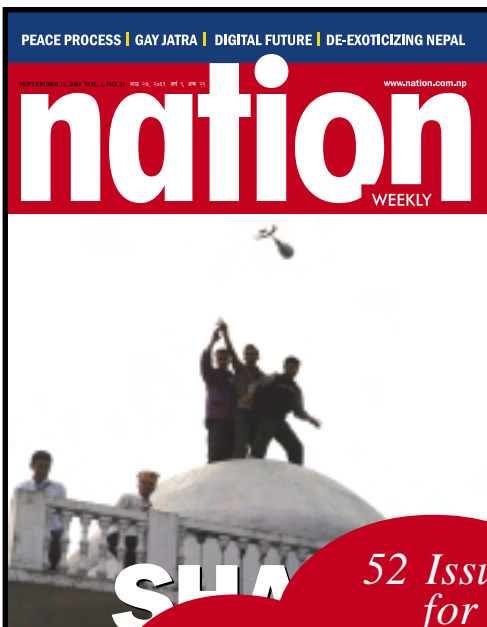
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# A Good Life

BY ADITYA ADHIKARI

**S**elf-styled businessman and philanthropist Narayan Shrestha makes regular visits to Kathmandu and remote Khandbari from his home in Colorado to promote his projects. Chief among them: SANN International College and the SANN Institute of Nursing. The former was

established as a center for student exchanges with the United States. The more recently opened Institute of Nursing teaches three semesters of a U.S nursing curriculum, and many of its students continue their education in the United States.

These innovative ideas are characteristic of Shrestha, who seems to possess an unfailing business instinct. He knows about self-promotion too, a trait that hasn't always earned him friends. More than his business successes, the trajectory of his personal life, a story full of luck and portents, has won him admirers in Nepal and overseas. It's story of how a listless young tourist in America transformed himself.

"I have had a good life," says Shrestha. "I hardly knew what I was heading to when I left for America." The year was 1977, the month November, he says with precision. He is equally exact about all the other important dates in his life. Shrestha was then 26 years old and station manager at Tumlingtar airport. He got a tourist visa to the United States and, after brief sojourns in New York and Chicago, he arrived in Boulder, Colorado with \$150 in his pocket, reliant on the hospitality of Bob McNelly, a friend he met

in Nepal a long time ago. "That was a strange time," says Shrestha. "All my illusions about the universal wealth of the Americans were shattered when I discovered that my friend was very poor." McNelly's house was an incomplete three-story building with no windows, no kitchen and no bathroom. Shrestha was given a tent on the third floor, where he stayed for two weeks amid icy winter winds. He bathed at the University of Colorado campus 13 kilometers away.

When his patience ran out, Shrestha called another friend he had made in Nepal, Dr. Peter Skafta, a professor at the University of Texas in

Dallas. Skafta offered him a place to live in for a month. "When I got to Dallas my friend asked me what my plans were," says Shrestha. "I said I was going back home, but he encouraged me to stay on and study there. I had 90 dollars remaining, and he lent me an additional 200 to help pay for my first semester at the University of Texas." With limited English skills, Shrestha was at first overwhelmed. But he persevered and took additional classes in the visual arts, the English language and theater.

Then a moment of truth, a turning point in his life. After six months at the university, immigration officials interviewed him. He had come to the United States on a tourist visa.

"Why did you bring your school certificates with you if you came here as a tourist?" "I thought maybe I'd try to apply to university here." "So you knew that you would be staying on after your visa expired." "That was a possibility, yes. But I wasn't completely sure."

Later, he was told that had given all wrong answers. His visa was denied. A teacher referred him to the registrar, who suggested crossing the border from Brownsville, Texas to Matamoras, Mexico to get a visa. Along the way he met people who had visited Nepal and were deeply sympathetic to him.





June 3, 1978, Shrestha says, was the date of his visa interview in Matamoros. The interviewing officer, who had spent two years in Birgunj, took an instant liking to him: He got his visa. “My luck was beginning to come good,” he recalls.

With a visa in his pocket, he began to relax, and his grades fell. He decided to move back to Boulder. Eight years after his arrival he had little money, no job and child support from a failed marriage to pay. He attempted to open a restaurant, but the project failed even before the opening. With extreme difficulty he borrowed \$15,000 and bought a store named Vision of Tibet that sold Himalayan curios. His entrepreneurship began to show. “Nepal native offers services for trekkers to Nepal,” read a poster on his window. Fourteen people signed up. He charged them \$3,000 each and headed home for the first time in nine years.

“My objective in Nepal was to get married to a nice Nepali woman. My requirements were that she be slim,

with long hair and a decent education.” In Kathmandu, he visited six families, but didn’t take a liking to any of the women he met. At a party he ran into an old friend. The friend was living in a rented house, and the landlord’s daughter, he thought, would be a perfect match. He met the girl’s parents, but the daughter didn’t appear. As he left the house she happened to get a glimpse of him, a scruffy man much older than her, dressed in trekker gear. She told her parents she would not get married to him.

Shrestha’s friend told him to come back that evening with a haircut and shave, in nice clothes, driving a nice car. He went out shopping for clothes, went to the barber, borrowed a car from a friend and went back to the house. As he was eating dinner, the female members of the family went to convince Shreejana, the landlord’s daughter, to come and see for herself.

She arrived, willing to give 20 minutes of her time. The meeting was more interrogation than conversation, with Shrestha on the receiving end. All the questions concerned his first son, Nathan. “You have a son by a previous marriage?” “Yes.” “Are you paying child support?” “Yes, of course.” “So you do love him a lot?” “Yes.” “He lives with his mother?” “Yes.” “Would you be willing to let him live with you?” “Yes.”

She finally stopped. It was Shrestha’s turn: “Can I ask you a question now?” “Yes.” “Will you marry me?” She nods her head slightly, embarrassed. “Is that a yes or a no?” “Yes, I will marry you.” He canceled his return flight to America, slated for the next day.

On November 16, 1986 Narayan Shrestha and Shreejana Maskey were married in court. Five months later they had a formal Hindu ceremony, and in August Shrestha returned to the States with his new wife.

Shrestha’s story from here on loses the aura of legend of his early struggles. Shreejana took over the store and made its profits soar. He opened a series of Nepali and Thai restaurants in Colorado in the nineties. A nightclub was established and then sold for a hefty profit. A travel agency was opened.

With America conquered with his wife’s generous help—without her, “I couldn’t have done anything at all”—he embarked on a Nepal journey. He established a school in his birthplace, Khandbari; SAAN International College and SAAN Nursing Institute followed.

Now a family man, entrepreneur and philanthropist, Shrestha is chiefly occupied with developing his projects in Nepal. You may not like everything about him, but he is the quintessential immigrant to the United States, tenacious, seizing every opportunity for growth as well as for enjoyment. “I have always had a great life,” he says with satisfaction. It is evident that he plans to continue to do so. ■

# CITY ThisWeek

## EVENTS



### Beauti and Boutika

Kathmandu Exhibitions in cooperation with Federation of Woman Entrepreneurs Associations of Nepal (FWEAN) and the WAVE magazine organizing "Beauti and Boutika 2004" for the first time in Nepal. The major objective of this exhibition is to bring together all the fashion accessories to a common platform and ease the needs of the customers to find varieties of product for Dashain. Beauty and Boutika will feature various cosmetic products, dif-

ferent types of dress materials and also a fashion show with latest fabric of the season. This will certainly be the best means for live demonstration and direct selling and buying. On spot activities like tattoo painting, mehndi painting, etc. will also be entertained.

Card dropping and Beauty contest will help you win dozen of prizes at the exhibition. Visiting cards including name, address, telephone number and the reason for visit, may be dropped in

## SAMYAK DRISTI

## PHOTO EXHIBITIONS

Journalist, critic, and filmmaker Shekhar Kharel comes up with the latest in his series of photo exhibition "Samyak Dristi." "Samyak Dristi" (Rightfold Vision) is one among the eight principles propounded by Lord Buddha. Shekhar is the recipient of the first prize in a nationwide photography contest that marked the Visit Nepal 1998 campaign. He is currently working with Nepal Weekly. Shekhar has dedicated this exhibition to his son, Samyak. He says, "For me, photography is the juxtaposition of beauty and technology. It is a new age art."



the box at the main entrance gate. Later a winner will be chosen from among those cards through a lucky draw. Also watch out for the Beauty Contest. The selection for Miss Beautiful each day will be done on the basis of a lucky draw system. Finally the best of five will be selected on the final day.

Forms for participation will be available on spot. A grand opportunity to find all you need in one place and save your time for the monotonous Dashain shopping. Venue: Birendra International Convention Hall (BICC), New Baneshwor. Date: September 10 to September 14.



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## ONGOING

### Sekuwa Saanjh

At the Dwarika's Hotel every Friday from 7 p.m. onwards @ Rs. 555 plus tax per person. Includes BBQ dinner, a can of beer or soft drink. Live music by Abhaya and The Steam Injuns playing blues, jazz and more. Drop your visiting cards or BBQ coupons for a "Lucky Draw". For information: 4479488.

### Spin And Jive With DJ Raju And The Cloud Walkers

DJ Raju spins out the beats catering to the needs of the dance floor —hip hop, reggae, rock, pop, latino, arabic, underground, electric and music for all the party souls. Also jive with The Cloud Walkers. Enjoy the happy hour from 6-10 p.m. At the Rox bar, Hyatt Regency. For information: 4491234.

### Summit BBQ

Barbeque with vegetarian specials at Summit Hotel. Every Friday. For information: 5521810.

### Italian & Oriental Specials

From light meals to a delicious array of international and Asian buffets. Step in anytime, any day at The Sunrise Café. Treat yourself to the mouth watering Italian and Oriental specials on Mondays and Wednesdays. Time: 12-3 p.m. (lunch); 6:30-10:30 p.m. (din-

ner). At The Sunrise Café, Hotel Yak & Yeti. For information: 4248999.

### Krishnarpan

The Nepali specialty restaurant at Dwarika's Hotel, serves from four to 16 course ceremonial meals. Open for lunch and dinner. Table reservations recommended. For information: 4479488

### Dwarika's Thali

Lunch at The Heritage courtyard. Enjoy Nepali cuisine, hospitality and heritage at Dwarika's courtyard, an unforgettable experience. For information: 4479488.

### Continental delicacies

Chef's special. At Keyman Royal Siano Restaurant, Durbarmarg. Everyday. Time: 12-3 p.m. For information: 4230890.

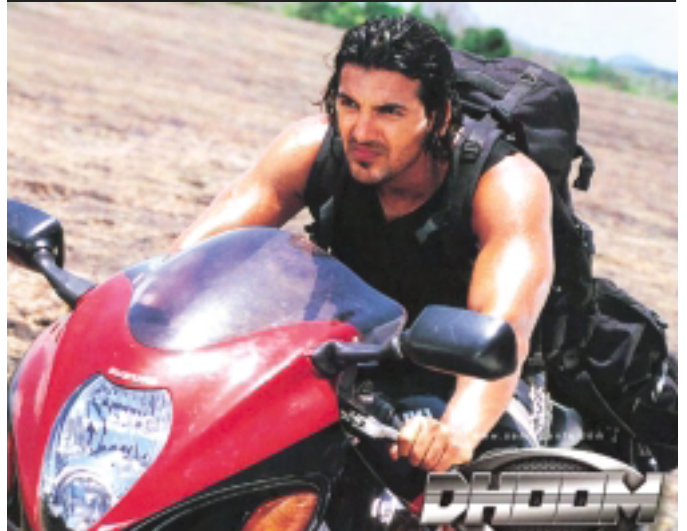
### Food program

Special Barbeque lunch (Chicken, Fish, Mutton) at Restaurant kantipur, Club Himalaya. Every Sunday. price: Rs. 500 per person. For information: 6680080, 6680083.

### Electronic Open Air Party

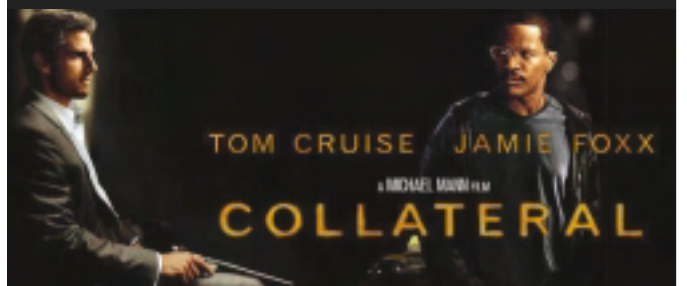
Chill out Garden. House, Hard, Progressive and Psy. Trance with the Funky Buddha Psy. Club. Every Friday at Funky Buddha Bar and Cafe. Time: 7:30-6 a.m. Free Entrance. For information: 4411991.

## SHOWING AT JAI NEPAL CINEMA



**Dhoom:** The tale begins in Mumbai where a sophisticated gang of robbers headed by Kabir (John Abraham) is sweeping through the city, giving nightmares to the police department. The high point of these thefts is always the getaway of the robbers on their hi-tech bikes - the slickest, meanest and the fastest riding machines on the road. Jai Dixit (Abhishek Bachchan), an honest police officer, is brought in to crack the case. Initially daunted by the speed and mannerisms of the gang, Jai ropes in the services of Ali (Uday Chopra), a happy-go-lucky garage mechanic and a prodigious bike rider. Ali, the reluctant recruit, and Jai set up an ambush. But Kabir soon catches up on the Jai-Ali team. And so starts the hunt, where sometimes the hunter becomes the hunted. Jai and Ali find their various attempts thwarted, as the gang keeps slipping from their grasp.

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# Digital FUTURE

As Internet availability and use rise, young Nepalis are in for big changes

BY YASHAS VAIDYA

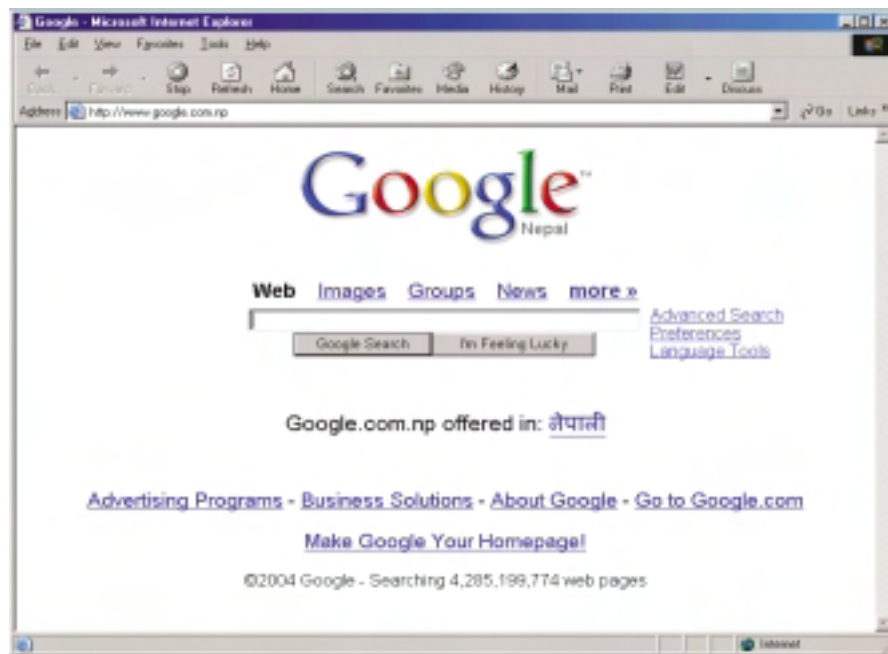
The Internet has fundamentally changed things the world over, from Manhattan to Madrid. The way people communicate, work, do business and pay their bills have been altered forever. In Mangal Bazaar and Mahendranagar, things have been changed too. The Internet is a powerful tool: We are just beginning to see its effect.

The Internet has made many things possible. One is online chat rooms and online messaging. The Internet provides us with the capability to talk to another person, anywhere in the world, in a far-off country or right next door, instantly.

What this means to today's generation, to the teenagers who are the heaviest users and fastest adopters of the technology is complex. "For me, it was mostly about kill-

ing time," says Guinness Shrestha, just out of high school. "I used to go to public chat rooms. Sometimes I used to get addresses from there, maybe add them later for private chats. Talking to different people from different backgrounds was purely for fun."

That seems harmless enough. But put aside the teenaged nonchalance: The Internet is a powerful tool that can really affect people. Meet Kumud Nepal, a high school student, and self-described "ex-chatter." Talking about the long hours he spent in front of the computer chatting with people from different countries, mostly teenagers like himself, he says, "I guess the influence of the Internet and chatting on the changing lifestyle and social norms of the new generation unfolds into a bigger question of individualism. I became more individualistic as I spent hours chatting and surfing the net."



nw/SS

Individualism is somewhat out of place in a society that still focuses more on the community. The concept is heady stuff, innately appealing, *phoren* and against prevailing customs and attitudes in society. Nothing could appeal to teenagers more. Chatting gives youngsters more freedom than is usually found here, both increased opportunity to meet new people and, most of all, anonymity. Internet chatters choose their own nicknames, or handles in chat jargon. The handle can be almost anything, and it's easy to change. Chatters can give out as much or as little personal information as they like, or make up a name and identity. "It gives you an amazing sense of freedom," says Nepal. "I was the kind of guy who never talked to girls in real life. But I felt a lot more comfortable when I was sitting before a computer screen and chatting with girls—confident even."

For some people the appeal of chatting is more than just the comfort of anonymity. "I don't like hanging out with





people as such," says 19-year-old Shrada Thapa. "I immediately blushed whenever I had to talk to boys in my college. But it's funny how I can talk to the same people online, without any problems." Without the pressure of a face-to-face meeting, it's easier to open up.

This phenomenon isn't just about the Internet. It has had a lot of impact on the lives of the online younger generation. For some like Thapa and Nepal it means more freedom. For others it means exposure to new ideas and adopting a more liberal outlook on things. "For example," says Shrestha, "in our society, relationships are given a lot of weight, a lot of fuss attached to relationships between boys and girls. But after talking to so many people, including girls, I take them much more lightly." Such changes in outlook have made people more open. In doing so, it has created a gap between the younger generation, who are most affected by this phenomenon, and the older one, who have been left out.

"Most of our society thinks in the same old way," says Somee Khand, a college student. "We who have been exposed more to things on the outside think differently." So, on the one hand our society is still a conservative one, but many in the generation that is to come hold a different view on things.

Online chatting is just a small part of a much larger interconnected world. But it provides an understanding preview of the larger wave of change already on the way. The views of the younger generation on inter-caste marriage, homosexuality, pre-marital sex and even freedom of speech differ from traditional ones. Cable television, movies, music and so on account for a lot of this. But the Internet and online chatting have had a much larger impact than is obvious. It shapes and changes the perceptions of many youth. In doing so it also changes our society. "I was making my own society on the net," says Nepal of this change, "a virtual society among chatters, and I was losing touch with the real one that I lived in. The new generation is on sort of a 'mission' to redefine society." ■

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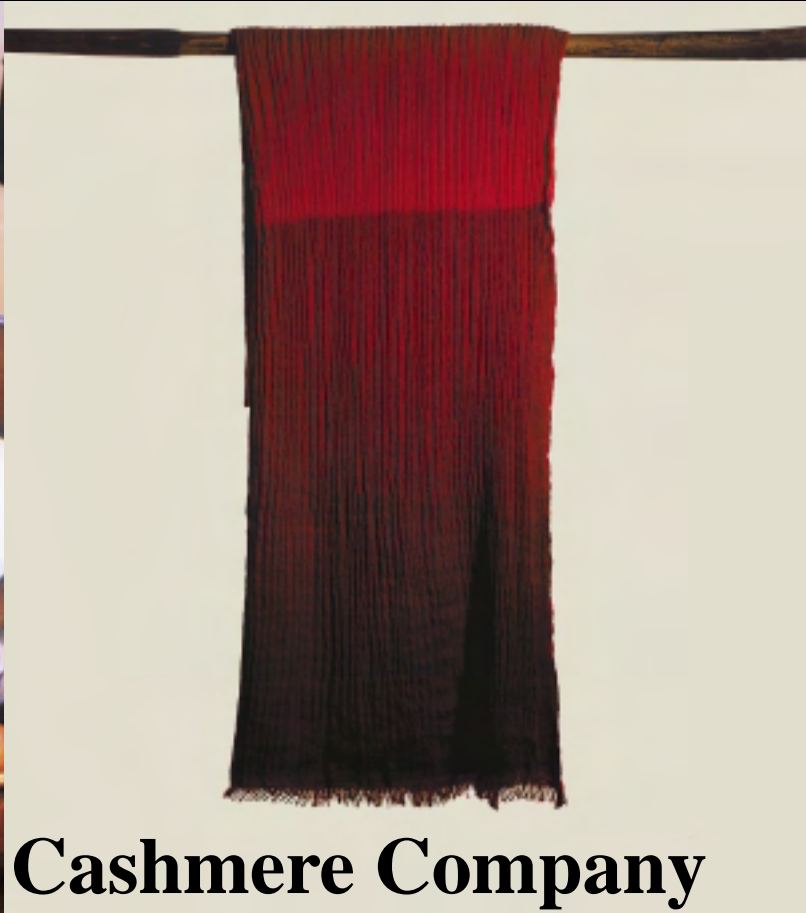
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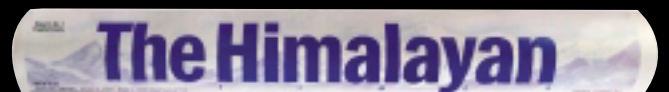


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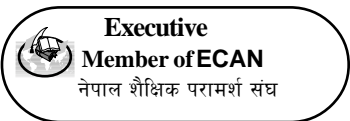
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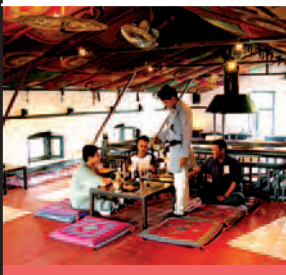


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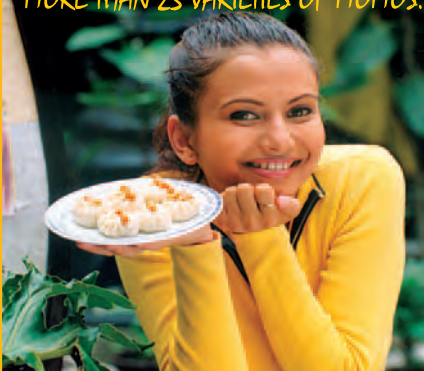
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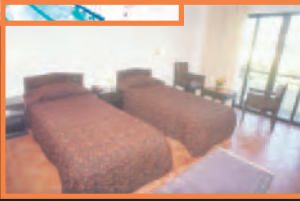


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# Meaningful Expression

**O**ne of the most successful directors in the Nepali film industry, **Tulsi Ghimire** started his career in India in 1974. After two decades in Bollywood, Ghimire set out for Kathmandu, the call from Nepali film industry was too strong to resist for the native of Kalimpong. He has been very prolific since: He has 17 feature films and 52 television serial episodes to his credit. And it's not just the volume. He is the only Nepali director to have a record three "silver jubilee" hits. Three of his films have had 25-week-long runs at cinema halls—"Kusume Rumal," "Chino" and "Lahure." Times however are bad for the film industry and Ghimire has now switched to television. He talked to Indra Adhikari about his latest work on television serials and the story behind his long film career.



**Are television serials your priority now?**

Not really. I am now working on the serial "Darshan Jindagiko." This because I promised this years ago. It's almost complete, and I will be filming a new cinema next month. To me, both films and television are important.

**How do you view the present state of Nepali cinema?**

The industry is waiting for a change, waiting for new trends and new talents. I say it is currently in a fluid state. It's trying to redefine itself. We have enough filmmakers; what we lack is sound marketing managers. It takes people with vision for business to expand the market. It definitely requires more investments. Rs. 3 million, the average investment in a Nepali film, cannot produce films that can compete against Bollywood products.

**There are charges that Nepali cinema lack quality?**

That's because investors do not quite know what they want. Investors and producers lack perspectives. Unless we have concrete ideas about why we are making films, changes will be rare. What the industry requires is sound investments, creativity and proper marketing.

**Can Nepali films make it to international markets?**

Sure. The government must make efforts towards that, and filmmakers must strive for originality. They must stop imitating scripts from India. There must be regular film festivals, but not like those organized today. They are all cheats.

**Unless we have concrete ideas about why we are making films, changes will be rare**

**You have worked for 19 years in Bollywood and later in Nepal for more than 15 years. Which has been more interesting?**

Of course it is easier to work in Mumbai, but Kathmandu is no less interesting. Mumbai has the technology, we don't, and this probably why we have not been able to produce films to suit the viewer's tastes. Teamwork comes more naturally to Nepalis since we have smaller and more easily manageable teams.

**Most of your films feature fresh artists, but they are still successful. How do you do that?**

The Nepali film industry still doesn't have enough human resources. That is why I like to give exposure to fresh talents. But I give them enough training and guidance before they start their career. We discuss the ethics of performing arts. Many Nepali artists don't have any knowledge of this. I also help them with physical fitness and creativity in acting.

**Many of your films have been big hits. What is your "formula"?**

It is just simplicity. The story plays a vital role. Any story that touches the everyday-life of people is bound to make its mark. A good film script and lyrics must hold the essence of literature. My prime target is to give all these flavors.

**You collect pebbles whenever you are at a river...**

It's my hobby. I enjoy the shapes of stones. I play with them. I think nothing can give me as much pleasure as a well-shaped stone can. It's nature and I am a nature lover. I have more than two sacks of such stones. **N**



# World Without Borders

A novel with a computer virus as a chief character may sound off-putting. But in this book it is an inspired idea, as technology is what holds the modern world together.

BY ADITYA ADHIKARI

**T**he author possesses an Indian name, two of the three main characters are Indian and Rushdie's influence is clearly evident. But Hari Kunzru's second novel, "Transmission," does not fall into any of the genres of contemporary Indian fiction. London, Scotland and the Silicon Valley are where most of the action happens, and all of the three characters are free-floaters, unencumbered by caste or family. "I'm fascinated by the emergence of a global class. They're highly mobile and they reject the idea of place," Kunzru says. "Transmission" is an attempt to describe this global class through three participants in the frenetic world of the global economy.

Arjun Mehta, a young, solitary computer geek leaves the comforts of New Delhi to test his luck in Silicon Valley. Virugenix, an anti-virus company in Redmond, Oregon, hires him. He goes through a failed romance and creates a computer virus that causes serious data damage all over the world. The FBI believes he is a terrorist, and so Arjun finds himself on the run. Guy Swift is a marketing executive, blessed with good looks and hereditary money, based in London with clients all over the world. Enormously wealthy, assured of his own talent, he is in for a shock when his company, Transcendenta, begins to crumble and his girlfriend, the stunningly beautiful and equally rich Gabriella Caro, leaves him. Leela Zahir is a Bollywood actress pushed into the business by her vulgar and domineering mother. She too has a crisis and, much to the anger of the producer and director of the film she's working on, refuses to

come out of her hotel room in Scotland to work on the film.

Arjun, Guy and Leela never meet. They are never even in the same place, and the only thing they have in common is the virus. They are affected by it throughout; all of them undergo major life changes as a result of it. Technical details of com-



puters are prominent in the book. But they are wound up tightly with the plot and so are never boring. A novel with a computer virus as a chief character may sound off-putting, but in this book it is an inspired idea. Technology is what holds the infrastructure of the modern world together: Kunzru couldn't have chosen a better way to illustrate the dynamics of the global class he is interested in. Besides providing a thread that connects the characters, the virus also provides Kunzru opportunities to reflect on societies all over

the world. Occasionally these reflections are hilarious as well as dead on target. When the virus has spread and caused worldwide damage, in the United States a radio station holds a show to discuss the damage and its consequences. Bobby from Topeka calls in and says: "Torture. That's the only way we'll find out who's behind this." "Torture who?" asks the host. "Hell, I don't know," says Bobby, "Whoever they got to I suppose." On the other side of the world, in response to the same crisis, the Chinese government seriously considers shutting down Internet access altogether.

On the human level, while Arjun has his charms, his actions are not always believable. Leela is less of a character than an outlet for Arjun's fantasies and an opportunity for Kunzru to describe the workings of Bollywood, which, it

seems, he knows about mostly through the media. Guy has the best-developed character and inspires

the most feeling from the reader. He is trapped in his belief that imposing his will upon the world can solve any problem. When crisis strikes and there are moments when problems could have been solved through empathic communication, he persists in his bullheaded manner. His reaction when he finds out his girlfriend is about to leave him is funny and sad at the same time. Deciding that he can get her back by throwing money at her, he goes out and buys an extremely expensive piece of jewelry. He then mails it to her with a small card where he has written one word: "Impressed?"

The narrative moves at a swift, steady pace and is highly enjoyable. The conclusion however is wildly implausible and does not provide an adequate resolution. The reader is bound to feel disappointed, though Kunzru would probably argue that the end is a deliberate flaunting of narrative convention. Still, Kunzru is hot commodity in the London literary world and there is much in "Transmission" worth reading. **N**

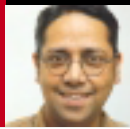
## Transmission

Author: Hari Kunzru

Penguin Books, London (2004)

Price: Rs. 710

Pages: 281



# Shame!

**T**he execution of 12 Nepalis in Iraq shocked the nation. To Ansar al-Sunna, the killing was “Allah’s ruling to 12 Nepalis who came from their land seeking assistance from their God Buddha in order to fight Muslims in this land, serving Jews and Christians, grandchildren of monkeys and pigs.”

Their fanaticism aside, our own government failed us twice in one week. First, it failed to protect our brothers in a foreign land. Second, it failed us again at home.

First, about the failed diplomacy and the spin doctors. Senior government officials tell us that Nepal—unlike India, which successfully secured the release of its hostages held in Iraq—just doesn’t have the international clout, and that even if some of them had rushed to Iraq, it would have meant little. That’s a dangerously flawed argument. Nepali officials had to be in Iraq for exactly that reason: We have far less clout than India. Because we are a much smaller nation, the onus lay on us to rely that much more on diplomacy. The least Prime Minister Deuba could have done was to have sent a ranking official or the foreign minister himself to do the bidding for us. The Royal appointee in the Cabinet, Mohammed Mohsin, would have been a perfect choice. As a Muslim, he would have enjoyed a lot more sympathy in Iraq than most others.

What the government relied on instead was proxy diplomacy: through the Arab television channel al-Jazeera and diplomats based in Pakistan, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, who were happy holding the remote control that wouldn’t work. They would dutifully give interviews to newspapers and TV networks from the safety of their respective bases during the hostage crisis. But none had the guts to find out firsthand what was actually happening on the ground in Iraq.

Their political masters in Kathmandu, themselves caught in the web of crises, were too timid to turn up the heat on them or to take bold initiatives. It was a leadership bereft of vision and imagination.

If that wasn’t bad enough, what happened a day after the news of the murders broke was even more depressing.

Police officials who had fought the rioters up until wee hours on Tuesday had told us they feared the worst on Wednesday. As much had been conveyed to the Valley’s top police officer, DIG Ashok Shrestha, and Home Minister Purna Bahadur Khadka. Curiously, the warnings went unheeded. On Wednesday, the total police deployment in the Valley was about 700, less than half the force that is mobilized on a day of trouble. Believe it or not, there were no Armed Police or Army personnel at vital installations and possible targets, such as mosques, Qatar Airways and Nepal Arab Bank.

When angry mobs—police estimate that they were anywhere between 20,000 to 30,000—turned out on the streets and in almost every corner of the city, most police personnel looked hopelessly ill-prepared and even complicit with the rioters—at least early in the day. To add fuel to fire they were told to “go easy on the protestors” until noon.

“If it was not for Kathmandu’s Superintendent of Police Narayan Bastakoti,” says a police officer, “Kathmandu would still be burning.” The story is that when Bastakoti saw that the mob was turning mad, he gave orders to his officers to use strong-arm tactics. In doing so he was even ready to defy the official dictates. He also demanded a curfew and got one.

By then close to 100 employment agencies had been ransacked. So were mosques, businesses with perceived Muslim connections and, inexplicably, media houses too—Kantipur and Spacetime Network. As many as 40 policemen sustained injuries.

As normalcy returns, questions are being asked not only about the government’s failed diplomacy and disgustingly poor policing. Nepalis feel deeply outraged that the international community and the Muslim world failed to come to our rescue in a moment of despair. And this outrage really runs very, very deep indeed.

Akhilesh Upadhyay, Editor



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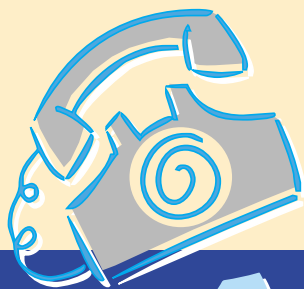
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